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**‘Constructing Brand Loyalty via Social Networks’**

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Faculty of the Humanities

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**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

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### **Abstract**

Identifying the construction of brand loyalty via social networks requires an analysis of the information sharing of a product or brand amongst a social network, therefore indicating the strength of the brand loyalty members of a social network not only have towards a brand, but also promote to other members of the same social network. This exchange of information amongst social network members is called ‘homophily’, where “similarity breeds connection” (McPherson, 2001, p.415). In order to determine the strength of brand loyalty amongst a social network, a qualitative study was performed on a sample of consumers from the ‘digital age’ generation (Castells, 2010, p.xviii), examining the extent of information exchange via social media as well as via the social networks. In addition to this a minor case-study was conducted where participants were asked a series of questions that pertained to a specific brand, that of Woolworths. This was done in order to determine the strength of the brand loyalty they had for a particular brand that may then be theoretically applied on a general scale. As a result the strength of their brand loyalty was determined, indicating whether or not brand loyalty can be constructed via social networks. On the whole it can be determined that social networks play a strong role in the development of brand loyalty, particularly as it pertains to the current digital generation.

**Keywords:** Social Network, Habitus, Purchase Behaviour, Networked Society, Brand Loyalty, Consumer satisfaction, Homophily, Brand Trustworthiness

‘Constructing Brand Loyalty via Social Networks’

‘Minor Dissertation submitted as a requirement for Master’s degree in Media Theory and  
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*Dedicated to Mom and Dad*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Background and Motivation**

After exploring many avenues through which to pursue this line of research I have come to the conclusion that simple is best. Rather than attempting to determine how a certain brand would construct brand loyalty amongst young South African females through the use of social networking platforms, I decided to look at the perspective of information sharing amongst a consumer’s social network, and how this leads to their construction of brand loyalty. In order to achieve this, various articles pertaining to the topic from academics such as Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), Oliver (1999), Castells (2005), Bourdieu (1984), and Arpan, et al. (2006) amongst others, were examined to give an accurate framework on how to proceed. The aim of this study was to determine whether brand loyalty is constructed via social networks, focussing on females between the ages of 18 and 25 years. In order to frame the chosen research, Castells’ theory of a networked society, as well as Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, is referred to.

Although there has been a large amount of academic interest directed towards the reasons why consumers consume certain products and brands, and what influences their brand loyalty, there are very few articles in the South African context that allow insight into the topic of how brand loyalty is constructed via social networks. However, there are many international articles available that discuss the factors of brand loyalty, and social networks are in themselves a contributing factor. Previous studies show that 38% of American online shoppers have shared comments about products or brands via the use of social networking websites, 62% of online shoppers have read the comments shared by their friends about products or brands on Facebook (Crotty, 2012, pp. 7 - 8). 75% of online shoppers have followed a link or comment to a retailer’s website and then 53% of those online shoppers have then proceeded to purchase a product (Crotty, 2012, pp. 9 – 10).

In the 1990s, Richard L. Oliver released a research paper stating that consumer loyalty towards brands was not possible, that marketers should rather concern themselves with continuing to develop the already present concept of consumer satisfaction. However, he acknowledged that there were ‘cracks’ appearing in the popularity of merely perpetuating consumer satisfaction studies, as the paradigm shifted to the consumer and brand loyalty becoming the prominent new strategic business goal (Oliver, 1999). Oliver claims that this

monopoly by customer satisfaction has led to a desire for an examination of brand loyalty which is “spawned by the widespread adoption of the marketing concept, efforts to align marketing strategy with the goal of maximizing customer satisfaction have been pursued in earnest by product and service providers” (1999, p. 33). Wylie supports Oliver’s (1999) observation by stating that in 1993, the reported data illustrates that post-purchase research, “largely including customer satisfaction work,” accounted for one-third of revenues received by the largest U.S. research firms (1993, p. S-1). Oliver further supports his claim by presenting subsequent data compiled by Higgins (1997) that confirms the trend, “showing that the number of firms that commissioned satisfaction studies in 1996 increased by 19% and 25% in the United States and Europe, respectively” (1999, p. 33). Despite Oliver’s claims that brand loyalty is unattainable there are many other theorists who beg to differ. Court et al. (2009) argue that brand loyalty is in fact possible, they even go so far as to categorise various degrees to which consumers can experience brand loyalty. Moreover, despite his protestations regarding the probability of brand loyalty, Oliver (1999) too presents an argument where he examines what he believes are varying degrees of brand loyalty. For the purpose of this study, both arguments are presented so as to provide an opposing view in order to help consolidate the findings and the conclusion.

The development of brand loyalty has been widely discussed amongst global scholars. Li and Miniard (2006) argue that the trust of the consumer towards a product can only be gained through interactions with the product over time, as well as through messages delivered from a ‘trustworthy’ source. For the purpose of this study someone in the consumer’s immediate social network, such as a family member or a friend. In addition, Christodoulides claims that “one specific strategy ... is to facilitate the creation and sharing of user generated content. This is expected to lead to stronger and deeper relationships between brands and consumers and more effective brand communities (Van den Bulte and Wuyts, 2007)” (2009, p. 142). A prevalent argument frequently seen in articles discussing brand loyalty and its development is that the foundation for brand loyalty and trust is that of previous knowledge and experience of the brand or product (Li and Miniard, 2006; Allan, et al., 2012). Consumers do not have to be aware of their previous encounters with a brand or product according to Arpan et al. (2006) who present a compelling study examining the influence that product placement in entertainment media has on a consumer’s subconscious, and therefore their consumption behaviour. As with all theories there is a counter argument. This study carefully presents opposing arguments to the majority of claims made in the examination of relevant literature.

This supplies both the researcher and the audience with a broader understanding of the topic and the projected results.

## **1.2 Research Objectives and Research Questions**

As previously stated, one of the aims of this research paper was to highlight the interdependence (a network) that is formed between consumers of a brand, regardless of whether it is on a local or global scale. To this aim Castells claims that “the process of globalization has accelerated the tempo of production, management, and distribution of goods and services throughout the planet...” (2010, p. xiii). This statement proves itself in the consumption behaviour of consumers in regards to their consumption of specific brands – brands that are widespread in their popularity. Despite the objective of this study to demonstrate the construction of brand loyalty through the social networks of consumers, the wider sociological aspect of social networks was not scrutinized too closely. However, despite this, society and its construction acted as an unappraised framework for the study. In order to meet the research objective, the following two research questions were proposed.

*RQ1: Can brand loyalty be constructed via a social network?*

*RQ2: Does ‘Trust’ and ‘Habitus’ play a part in maintaining the relationship between the consumer and a brand?*

## **1.3 Research Methodology**

In addition to Castells’ theory of a networked society, Bourdieu’s theory of habitus was also examined in order to supply a framework for the research. The implementation of the theory of habitus supplied a justification of how brand loyalty is perpetuated through the consumer’s social network – that purchasing or consuming the same brands as those in the consumer’s social network is a learnt behaviour appropriate to their social standing. This aspect of the habitus is examined by King when he claims that it “...is derived directly from the socioeconomic or structural position in which individuals find themselves. Thus, individuals unconsciously internalize their objective social conditions, such as their economic class, so that they have the appropriate tastes and perform the appropriate practices for that social position” (2000, p. 423). King further substantiates his statement by saying that, “...the

habitus ensures that the individual will inevitably act according to the logic of the situation”<sup>1</sup> (2000, p. 243).

As stated, the analysis conducted in this research paper aims to illustrate how brand loyalty is constructed via the social networks of consumers; an analysis that has a foundation based on the extensive literature encompassing the topic of social networks and brand loyalty, as presented below.

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<sup>1</sup> When referring to society and the habitus, Bourdieu states that, “[T]he principle division into logical classes which organises the perception of the social world is itself the product of the internalization of the division of social classes” (1984, p. 170). For the purpose of this study Bourdieu’s supposition will be applied to the social networks of consumers.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Brand Loyalty Literature**

Brand loyalty and trust plays an important role in brand management, as it is the ‘relationship’ that the consumer develops with a favoured brand that then ensures the successful long term consumption of that product.

#### ***2.1.1 Consumer Satisfaction***

As previously discussed, Oliver illustrates the importance of brand loyalty – or as he refers to it, ‘brand satisfaction’ – by presenting a factual representation as the opening to his paper, stating that;

For some time, satisfaction research has been "king." Spawned by the widespread adoption of the marketing concept, efforts to align marketing strategy with the goal of maximizing customer satisfaction have been pursued in earnest by product and service providers. Reported data show that, in 1993, post-purchase research, "largely including customer satisfaction work," accounted for one-third of revenues received by the largest U.S. research firms (Wylie 1993, p. S-1). Subsequent data (Higgins 1997) confirm the trend, showing that the number of firms that commissioned satisfaction studies in 1996 increased by 19% and 25% in the United States and Europe, respectively. (1999, p. 33).

According to Tse and Wilton, satisfaction amongst consumers can be defined as the "evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations ... and the actual performance of the product" (1988, p. 204). An alternative definition compiled by Newman and Werbel (1973), claims that loyal customers are those who rebuy a brand, consider only that brand, and do no other brand-related information seeking. Oliver states that this perception of consumer loyalty and satisfaction is faulty as they “record what the consumer does. None tap into the psychological meaning of satisfaction or loyalty.” (1999, p. 34).

Despite his vocal declarations of the impossibility of brand loyalty in many of his studies, Oliver still supplies his own definition of brand loyalty, stating that it is “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (1997, p. 392).

However, regardless of Oliver’s concerns, the common consensus is that in order for a brand to gain customer satisfaction, brand loyalty needs to be earned. Court, et al. state that there are various degrees of loyalty, that “of consumers who profess loyalty to a brand, some are active loyalists, who not only stick with it but also recommend it. Others are passive loyalists who, whether from laziness or confusion caused by the dizzying array of choices, stay with a brand without being committed to it. Despite their claims of allegiance, passive consumers are open to messages from competitors that give them a reason to switch” (2009, p. 6). Oliver (1997) adds his own ‘phases’ of loyalty, stating that consumers become loyal to a brand in a cognitive<sup>2</sup> sense initially, before becoming loyal in an affective<sup>3</sup> sense. After the cognitive and affective phases, consumers then develop loyalty in a conative<sup>4</sup> manner and a behavioural<sup>5</sup> manner, also referred to as ‘action inertia’ (Oliver, 1997).

### **2.1.2 Trustworthiness**

It is agreed in academic texts that the consumer is reluctant to use a brand that they do not trust; a trust that is earned through knowledge of the product and previous benign experiences (Li and Miniard, 2006; Allan, et al., 2012). An article by Li and Miniard (2006) claims that the trust of the consumer towards a product can only be gained through interactions with the product over time, as well as through messages delivered from a ‘trustworthy’ source, in this case someone in the consumer’s social network. Christodoulides claims that “one specific

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<sup>2</sup> “*Cognitive loyalty*. In the first loyalty phase, the brand at-tribute information available to the consumer indicates that one brand is preferable to its alternatives. This stage is referred to as cognitive loyalty, or loyalty based on brand belief only. Cognition can be based on prior or vicarious knowledge or on recent experience-based information. Loyalty at this phase is directed toward the brand because of this "information" (attribute performance levels). This consumer state, however, is of a shallow nature. If the transaction is routine, so that satisfaction is not processed (e.g., trash pickup, utility provision), the depth of loyalty is no deeper than mere performance. If satisfaction is processed, it becomes part of the consumer's experience and begins to take on affective overtones” (Oliver, 1999, p. 35).

<sup>3</sup> “*Affective loyalty*. At the second phase of loyalty development, a liking or attitude toward the brand has developed on the basis of cumulatively satisfying usage occasions. This reflects the pleasure dimension of the satisfaction definition-pleasurable fulfillment-as previously described. Commitment at this phase is referred to as affective loyalty and is encoded in the consumer's mind as cognition and affect. Whereas cognition is directly subject to counter argumentation, affect is not as easily dislodged. The brand loyalty exhibited is directed at the degree of affect (liking) for the brand. Similar to cognitive loyalty, however, this form of loyalty remains subject to switching, as is evidenced by the data that show that large percentages of brand defectors claim to have been previously satisfied with their brand. Thus, it would be desirable if consumers were loyal at a deeper level of commitment” (Oliver, 1999, p. 35).

<sup>4</sup> “*Conative loyalty*. The next phase of loyalty development is the conative (behavioural intention) stage, as influenced by repeated episodes of positive affect toward the brand. Conation, by definition, implies a brand-specific commitment to repurchase. Conative loyalty, then, is a loyalty state that contains what, at first, appears to be the deeply held commitment to buy noted in the loyalty definition. However, this commitment is to the intention to rebuy the brand and is more akin to motivation. In effect, the consumer desires to repurchase, but similar to any "good intention," this desire may be an anticipated but unrealized action” (Oliver, 1999, p. 35).

<sup>5</sup> “*Action loyalty*. Study of the mechanism by which intentions are converted to actions is referred to as "action control" (Kuhl and Beckmann 1985). In the action control sequence, the motivated intention in the previous loyalty state is transformed into readiness to act. The action control paradigm proposes that this is accompanied by an additional desire to overcome obstacles that might prevent the act. Action is perceived as a necessary result of engaging both these states. If this engagement is repeated, an action inertia develops, thereby facilitating repurchase” (Oliver, 1999, p. 36).



strategy ... is to facilitate the creation and sharing of user generated content. This is expected to lead to stronger and deeper relationships between brands and consumers and more effective brand communities (Van den Bulte and Wuyts, 2007)” (2009, p. 142).

Therefore, they say that although an explicit trust appeal may be made by the brand, it does not guarantee the consumer’s cooperation unless the appeal has been issued from a source that they deem trustworthy, or in other words, a product or source that they are familiar with. As a result, advertisers have learned to be cautious when they present a product along with its disclaimer, as the speed at which the disclaimer is presented to the consumer may allow them to intuit whether the product is trustworthy or not (Allan, et al., 2012).

A study by Allan, et al., (2012) focuses on how the consumer uses the speed at which a product’s disclaimer is presented as a heuristic trust cue<sup>6</sup>, which informs the consumer that the speed of the disclaimer is proportional to the important information it contains. Therefore if the disclaimer is presented to the consumer at a fast rate it is assumed by the consumer that the advertiser is attempting to hide important information, consequently ‘tricking’ them into buying a product that is not trustworthy (Allan, et al., 2012). As a result, the consumer is alienated from the product often associating it with a bad experience and not forming the relationship of trust that is required for the consumer to purchase the product.

In their article, Allan, et al. (2012) explain that this occurs due to the fact that fast speech hinders the ability of the advertiser to persuade the consumer. Therefore, it is not necessarily the content of the disclaimer which endears itself to the consumer but rather the speed at which the advertiser attempts to persuade the consumer, thus endearing or alienating their product.

If an explicit trust appeal delivered by the advertiser does not appeal to the consumer the advertiser is then left to rely on the inferential processes of the consumer, which hinge on them having prior knowledge or experience with the product as mentioned previously (Li and Miniard, 2006; Hoyer and Macinnis, 2010). Thus, it can be deduced from the articles (Li and Miniard, 2006; Allan, et al., 2012) that the foundation for brand loyalty and trust is that of previous knowledge and experience of the brand or product – whether it be by product

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<sup>6</sup> Refers to, “any variable whose judgemental impact is hypothesized to be mediated by a simple decision rule.” (Bargh and Uleman, 1989:216)

placement as Arpan, et al., claims (2006) or by physical experiences – or the conveyance of a positive message regarding the brand or product through a “trustworthy” source.

### ***2.1.3 Developing Brand Loyalty***

An alternative view of the development of brand loyalty is presented by Oliver who states that there are five essential criteria to the development of brand loyalty. He describes these criteria as; “First, the product must be of some unique configuration that makes it desirable (i.e., superior). Second, a profitably sized segment of the firm's customers must find it desirable in this manner. Third, the consumable must be subject to adoration, at least in the eyes of the firm's potentially loyal consumers. Fourth, the product must have the capacity to be embedded in a social network, for if a firm's consumers cannot be networked at least perceptually, they cannot feel that they are part of a village. Fifth, the company must be willing to expend resources to create, populate, and maintain the village. This does not have to be a physical or even electronic (e.g., Internet) village but rather can be maintained through communication at the corporate or local levels” (Oliver, 1999, p. 41).

An exception to the formation of brand loyalty can be engineered via the use of role-models; this does not require the consumer to have previous knowledge or use of a product. This is achieved when brand placement is used in association with a well-known personality (often an actor/actress or sports personality) therefore implying to the consumer that the product has been endorsed by the celebrity associated with it (Arpan, et al., 2006). This grants the consumer a sense of security when considering the credibility of the associated brand and influencing their purchase behaviour (Li and Miniard, 2006). This can be translated as a high-quality level of trust in the relationship between the consumer and a product, thus initiating the intention in the consumer to purchase the product repeatedly, displaying the positive relationship they have with the brand (Halim, 2011). Gundlach, et al. (1995) as cited by Halim (2011) describes this as a relationship between the loyalty of the consumer and the positive effect it has on their purchase behaviour, which he claims the consumer accepts because of brand trust.

## **2.2 Social Network Literature**

Another source of role-models can be those that are a part of the consumer’s social network, whom Wellman, et al. refer to as “a set of people (or organisations or other social entities)

connected by a set of social relations, such as friendship, co-working, or information exchange” (1999, p. 75).

A study conducted by Court, et al., (2009) states that the relationship between brands and consumers has moved away from one-way communication – from brands to consumers – to a relationship that is formed by an increasingly two-way conversation (p.2), “in today’s decision journey, consumer-driven marketing is increasingly important as customers seize control of the process and actively ‘pull’ information helpful to them” (2009, p.5). This is a statement that is supported by Christodoulides, who says that “consumers are now empowered to interact with brands and other consumers” (2009, p. 141). As a result, one of the ways that consumers now form impressions of brands is through “conversations with friends and family” (Court, et al., 2009, p.2).

Christodoulides says that another way is also through the way that “consumers are now wired and [therefore] capitalize on social networks to derive power from one another. They develop their own perspective on companies and brands, a view that is often in conflict with the image a brand wishes to convey” (2009, p.142).

Therefore, “a community of consumers’ who use Web 2.0 applications to get the things they need from one another, rather than from companies, is further shifting the balance of power from firm to consumer (Bernoff and Li, 2008)...‘There are no secrets. The networked market knows more than companies do about their own products. And whether the news is good or bad, they tell everyone’” (Levine et al., 2001, as cited by Christodoulides, 2009, p.142). As a result it can be said that familial/parental influence via concept-orientation is not the only factor contributing to the formation of purchase behaviour/brand loyalty in the youth, there is also the characteristic of needing to fit into a peer accepted cultural norm or social network (Moschis and Mitchell, 1986). Due to this factor, youthful consumers between the ages of eighteen and twenty five years are often influenced into buying products that illustrate their participation in the brand’s social network via product ownership. Thus, it can be deduced that consumer purchase behaviour is a characteristic that is learnt via interpersonal communications taught by the parental, peer, and environmental influences surrounding the youth from a young age.

According to Lachman, et al., the “cost of acquiring information decreases with group size, and consequently the amount of information per individual increases as more information becomes ‘affordable’, the amount of relevant and/or worthwhile information for an individual also increases with the size of the collective to which it belongs” (2000, pp. 1289 – 1290). Therefore when sharing information via social networks the more people that are in the network the less costly the sharing of information will be, as Christodoulides states, “while the internet enables consumers to express their identity and reinforce their individuality through personalization and customization, it also allows them to satisfy their social needs through sharing of consumption related experiences”. (2009, pp. 142 – 143).

### **2.2.1 Brand Communities**

Consumers and their social networks form what Muniz and O’Guinn describe as a brand community, “a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (2001, p.412). These brand communities play a vital role in the ultimate ‘legacy’ of the brand as they perpetuate the image and reputation of the brand, increasing its social construction amongst consumers (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412).

As Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), Pessemier (1959), and Reichheld (1996); cited in Chaudhuri and Holbrook, state, “brand-loyal consumers may be willing to pay more for a brand because they perceive some unique value in the brand that no alternative can provide” (2001, p. 81). Brand loyalty relies heavily on the trust that a consumer places in the brand and the product that is produced, as such brand communities play an integral role in maintaining the relationship of trust between the brand and the consumer. Muniz and O’Guinn argue that this is because “the postmodern consumer is in fact quite self-aware and self-reflexive about issues of authenticity and identity” (2001, p.415).

### **2.2.2 Consciousness of Kind, Shared Rituals and Traditions, and Moral Responsibility**

According to Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) in their study, *Brand Community*, brand communities can be defined through the concepts of consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility.

Consciousness of kind was originally discussed by Gusfield (1978) in his article, *Community: A Critical Response*. In it he claims that the consciousness of kind is “...the intrinsic

connection that members feel toward one another, and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413).

This consciousness of kind is also what Bender (1978), refers to as “we-ness”, where “members feel an important connection to the brand, [and], they feel a strong connection toward one another” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 418). Bender’s definition of the consciousness of kind, is supported by Cova who states that, “the link is more important than the thing” (1997, p. 307), whereby he feels that the relationship that the consumer has with their fellow consumers (a relationship that is founded in their shared loyalty to a brand) is in fact more important than the relationship with the brand that they are loyal to.

This belief that the relationship shared by consumers is more important than the relationship that they hold with the brand is supported by the second theory put forward by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), that of shared rituals and traditions. As Douglas and Isherwood state, rituals “serve to contain the drift of meanings...they are conventions that set up visible public definitions” (1979, p.65), this statement is supported by Durkheim who adds that rituals also offer social solidarity to communities ([1915] 1965).

Members of the brand communities are not always conscious of their inclusion in the brand community, at some level they have an awareness of their inclusion but it is often not a conscious awareness. Oliver claims that this feeling of inclusion is best exemplified by Friedman, Vanden Abeele, and De Vos’ (1993) theory of a consumption community which is based on Boorstin’s (1973) “notion that individuals feel a sense of community when they share the same consumption values and behaviours” (1999, p. 40). Muniz and O’Guinn’s statement, “such communities, due to the ubiquitous nature of brands, may transcend geography and may include a multitude of consumer members. These social groups may be fairly stable and committed to both the brand and the group” (2001, p. 415), does not necessarily allow for the inclusion of casual membership of the brand community.

A consumer of the brand, and therefore a member of the brand community, does not necessarily need to be an active consumer of the brand. Simply partaking in a discussion about a brand and then spreading the information via word of mouth - and therefore indirectly furthering the image and consumption of a brand - would make a non-direct consumer a

member of that brand community via virtue of expanding the brand’s consumer social network.

This partially invalidates the third argument put forward by Muniz and O’Guinn (2001), that of moral responsibility, whereby they state that members of the brand community have a sense of duty or obligation to the brand community of which they are members. This will therefore inspire collective action amongst the whole as well as those members that are on the edges of the community (2001, p. 413).

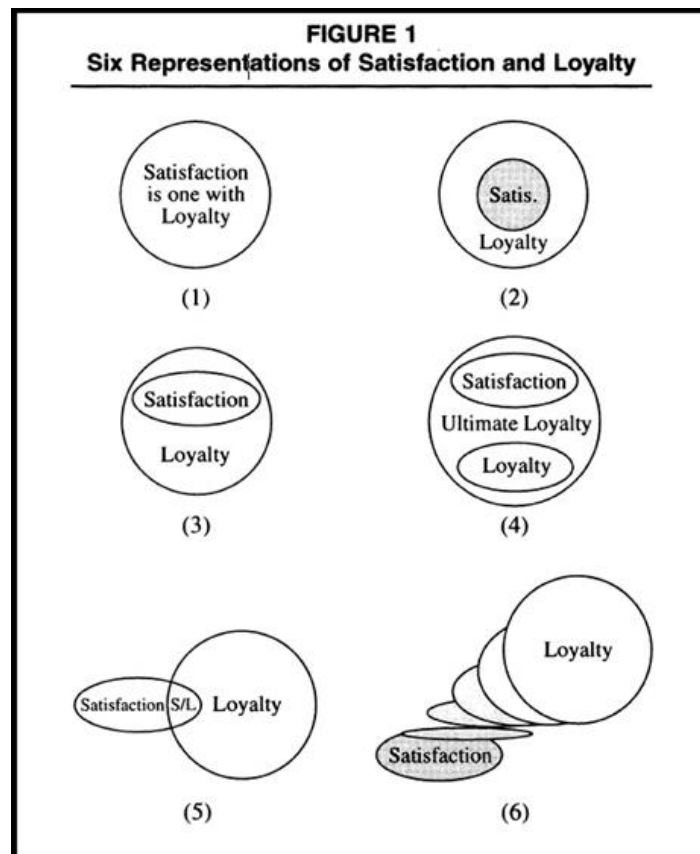
To this end, Muniz and O’Guinn state that consumers are part of a trend towards neo-tribalism, where the community is “experiencing a decline in individualism” (2001, p. 414). Shields, as cited by Muniz and O’Guinn, describes this theory of neo-tribalism in the brand community as the consumer “experiencing the reaggregation of hyperindividualist society in the form of “heterogeneous fragments, the remainders of mass consumption society” (1996, p. x)” (2001, p. 414). Muniz and O’Guinn are firm in their belief that “these brand communities may form around any brand, but are probably most likely to form around brands with a strong image, a rich and lengthy history, and threatening competition (2001, p. 415). This is not limited to race, culture, or nationality, as “...brands transcend geography because media transcend geography” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413).

### **2.3 Alternative Brand Loyalty Literature**

An alternative view on the concept of brand loyalty is expressed by Richard L. Oliver. As discussed previously, Oliver believes that consumers experience brand satisfaction rather than brand loyalty. As he states, “loyal consumers are most typically satisfied, satisfaction does not universally translate into loyalty” (Oliver, 1999, p. 33). However he does concur that the “...pursuit of loyalty as...strategic business goal[s] are becoming prominent” (Oliver, 1999, p. 33) within the consumer environment. To this end, Oliver examines the contributions of other scholars who advocate brand loyalty over brand satisfaction. One such scholar is Deming, who Oliver claims was among the first to state that “It will not suffice to have customers that are merely satisfied” (1986, p. 141). Jones and Sasser consolidate this view with their commentary that “[m]erely satisfying customers that have the freedom to make choices is not enough to keep them loyal” (1995, p. 91).

Although Oliver is content to acknowledge satisfaction and loyalty are inextricably linked, he adds that the relationship is asymmetric (Oliver, 1999). In order to illustrate his perception of

the diverse relationship between loyalty and satisfaction, he has compiled a series of six graphs (see Figure 1 below) that rationalise his theory. Oliver initially discussed the link between pleasure and consumer satisfaction in his study, *Satisfaction: A Behavioural Perspective on the Consumer*, in 1997. He revisits that theory in his 1999 paper where he states that the way to attain consumer satisfaction is to ensure that the consumer finds the experience of consuming a specific brand pleasurable. He claims that "consumption fulfills some need, desire, goal, or so forth and that this fulfillment is pleasurable. Thus, satisfaction is the consumer's sense that consumption provides outcomes against a standard of pleasure versus displeasure. For satisfaction to affect loyalty, frequent or cumulative satisfaction is required so that individual satisfaction episodes become aggregated or blended" (Oliver, 1999, p. 34).



"Six of the many and diverse possible associations of satisfaction and loyalty are shown as panels in Figure 1.

Panel 1 entertains the elementary assumption that satisfaction and loyalty are separate manifestations of the same concept, in much the same way that early total quality management promoters assumed that quality and satisfaction were identical pursuits. Panel 2 suggests that satisfaction is a core concept for loyalty, without which loyalty cannot exist, and that it anchors loyalty. Panel

3 relaxes the nucleonic role of satisfaction and suggests that it is an ingredient of loyalty but only one of its components.

Panel 4 suggests the superordinate existence of ultimate loyalty (which will be discussed subsequently), of which satisfaction and "simple" loyalty are components.

Panel 5 is true to the preceding statement that some fraction of satisfaction is found in loyalty and that that fraction is part of, but not key to, the very essence of loyalty. Finally,

Panel 6 suggests that satisfaction is the beginning of a transitioning sequence that culminates in a separate loyalty state. This situation also suggests that loyalty may become independent of satisfaction so that reversals in the satisfaction experience (i.e., dissatisfaction) will not influence the loyalty state." (Oliver, 1999, p. 34).

Oliver (1999) claims that there are many obstacles that prevent the development of loyalty amongst consumers. The first obstacle he claims is, ‘consumer idiosyncrasies’ – he explains that it goes against the consumer’s natural inclination to not seek variety and as a result a consumer can never truly develop loyalty towards a single brand as they are constantly seeking out variety (Oliver, 1999).

In addition to a consumer’s natural inclination to seek variety, ‘disloyalty’ towards a brand can stem from multi-brand loyalty, changes in the consumer’s needs (a child maturing and therefore no longer maintaining the need for certain toys), a withdrawal from the product category or a cessation of need (e.g. giving up smoking cigarettes) (Oliver, 1999). Oliver claims that another threat to brand loyalty is that of ‘switching incentives’, whereby a brand’s competitor takes advantage of the consumers’ inclination to seek variety and appeals to them on a cognitive level, presenting them with an alternative option to the product already being consumed (1999).

As discussed previously, Oliver believes that brand loyalty is developed via four phases; cognitive, affective, conative, and action (1999). Oliver argues that Cognitive loyalty to a brand is in fact “phantom loyalty” as the loyalty from the consumers’ is directed towards the costs and benefits offered by the brand and not the brand itself (1999).

Affective loyalty only becomes apparent with the deterioration of cognitive loyalty from the consumer toward the brand. This can happen when competitive brands use images and marketing that create a desirous affect towards their brand whilst making the consumer’s chosen brand appear to be less desirous (Oliver, 1999). This results in the creation of consumer dissatisfaction amongst consumers towards their original brand of choice (Oliver, 1999).

In contrast to affective loyalty, conative loyalty has the effect of creating a stronger loyalty towards a brand from the consumer. Consumers’ at this phase of brand loyalty can withstand some dissatisfying episodes with regards to their chosen brands, however, they are vulnerable to having this loyalty ‘worn down’ by repetitive competitive messages from competing brands (Oliver, 1999). As can be seen in Figure 1 provided by Oliver (1999), although the consumer has committed to their chosen brand, their brand loyalty at this phase of



consumption does not exclude them from exploring other offerings, further eroding the loyalty they have to a specific brand (Oliver, 1999).

At this point, if the consumer has withstood the barrage of competitive messages directed at them from alternative brands, it can be said that the brand has achieved “product superiority” (Oliver, 1999, p. 37). Oliver claims this is because “the firm has engendered enhanced liking, or even an established preference, for its brand because of the quality (information) and continued ability to satisfy. In addition, the consumer is committed to its repurchase in the future. However, the consumer has not reached the state of resistance, resilience, and the overcoming of obstacles necessary for ultimate loyalty to emerge” (Oliver, 1999, p. 37).

The action phase of brand loyalty indicates that “the consumer has generated the focused desire to re-buy the brand and only that brand and also has acquired the skills necessary to overcome threats and obstacles to this quest” (Oliver, 1999, p. 37). Consumers in this phase of brand loyalty will automatically ‘tune out’ the competitive messages directed at them by competing brands and will determinedly ‘search out’ the brand of their choice, bypassing all others (Oliver, 1999). Once they have reached this phase of loyalty, only a hugely dissatisfying experience, or unavailability of the brand, will push the consumer into trying an alternative brand and/or product (Oliver, 1999). Oliver states that, “the action loyal consumer has a deep commitment to repurchase, so much so that behaviour may be guiding itself in some habituated manner” (1999, p. 38). This observation strongly echoes Bourdieu’s theory of habitus<sup>7</sup> which is discussed in depth below.

### **2.3.1 Brand Commitment**

Oliver (1999) likens the commitment of brand loyalty felt by consumers towards a brand to the emotion of love. Oliver draws this conclusions from studies conducted by Ahuvia (1992), and Fournier (1998), which lead him to make the claim that “Love has many manifestations, but in the present context, the variant of interest is the love of consumable” (1999, p. 38).

When looking at brand loyalty as a form of love, Oliver considers it from two aspects, that of “adoration, or focused attention, and unfailing commitment” (1999, p. 38). According to Ping (1994) and Sambandam and Lord (1995), the aspect of adoration is a commonly used tool in

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<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu defines Habitus as “the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce the habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representation” (1990a, p. 53).

the marketing industry, most commonly seen in the automobile sector. Ahuvia (1992) refers to this type of commitment to a brand as ‘object love’, whereby “love objects provide need and want satisfaction; a sense of natural fit; and emotional outcomes, including thrill, excitement, passion, sentiment, contentment, and relaxation” (Oliver, 1999, p. 39). Oliver defines this relationship as an “aspect of loyalty [that] suggests that consumers may derive some psychic "romance" (as opposed to love) from identification with the brand. The symbolism of the corporate logo should imply to others a certain uniqueness possessed by the consumer and not by others” (1999, p. 39).

According to Wilson (1995), the aspect of ‘unfailing commitment’ is one of the key factors in the buyer-seller relationship. Oliver proposes that “this is one reason for the loyalty displayed toward human or humanlike consumables. Commitment to sports or entertainment celebrities would seem to follow this pattern, as would the popularity of personified animals and other objects” (1999, p. 39). Oliver also claims that the “phenomenon is also common among children, because they are known to form strong attachments to dolls, stuffed animals, animal-like objects (e.g., Barney, Kermit, Disney characters), and clothes (e.g., a favourite hat)” (1999, p. 39). Oliver concludes that “loyalty cannot be achieved or pursued as a reasonable goal by many providers because of the nature of the product category or consumer disinterest.” (1999, p. 33).

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.4.1 The Networked Society**

To frame this research, the theory of networked society by Manuel Castells will be referred to as it enables the shift away from the individual to “the network society...the social structure resulting from the interaction between the new technological paradigm and social organisation at large” (Castells, 2005, p. 4). As Castells stated about the development of social networks;

...it is made of networks in all the key dimensions of social organization and social practice. Moreover, while networks are an old form of organization in the human experience, digital networking technologies, characteristic of the Information Age, powered social and organizational networks in ways that allowed their endless expansion and reconfiguration, overcoming the traditional limitations of networking forms of organization to manage complexity beyond a certain size of the network. Because networks do not stop at the border of the nation-state, the network society constituted itself as a global system, ushering in the new form of globalization characteristic of our time (2010, p. xviii).

One of the points Castells puts forward in his book, *The Rise of the Network Society*, is that of the connection between local and global. As he states, “the key spatial feature of the network society is the networked connection between the local and the global” (Castells, 2010, p. xxxv). Part of the aim of this study was to illustrate the connections formed (a network) between consumers, whether it be on a local or global scale. To this aim Castells claims that “the process of globalization has accelerated the tempo of production, management, and distribution of goods and services throughout the planet...” (2010, p. xiii). A claim that can be illustrated via the consumption of the same brand, by consumers, on a global scale.

Although this study aims to illustrate the construction of brand loyalty through the social networks of consumers, the wider sociological aspect of social networks is not examined too closely. However, society and its construction acted as an unexamined framework for the study. As Castells states, “...societies are organized around human processes structured by historically determined relationships of *production*<sup>8</sup>, *experience*<sup>9</sup>, and *power*<sup>10</sup>” (2010, pp. 13-18).

This theory of a networked society is important in helping to define the age demographic of the sample. The age group of the sample used in this study falls into what Castells refers to as those that “grew up being digital” (2010, p. xviii); a generation that is very different to that of the generation prior to the digital age. The current generation conducts many of its relationships via technology, sometimes never meeting those that they claim as their ‘friends’. Because this study is looking at social networks amongst this age group (eighteen to twenty five years), as well as employing social media as a network and platform for the development of brand loyalty, this theory is essential to guiding the study and ensuring that the concept of the social network does not become lost.

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<sup>8</sup> Production is “...the action of humankind on matter (nature) to appropriate it and transform it for its benefit by obtaining a product, consuming (unevenly) part of it, and accumulating surplus for investment, according to a variety of socially determined goals” (Castells, 2010, pp. 13-18)

<sup>9</sup> Experience is “...the action of human subjects on themselves, determined by the interaction between their biological and cultural identities, and in relationship to their social and natural environment. It is constructed around the endless search for fulfillment of human needs and desires” (Castells, 2010, pp. 13-18)

<sup>10</sup> Power is “...that relationship between human subjects which, on the basis of production and experience, imposes the will of some subjects upon others by potential or actual use of violence, physical or symbolic” (Castells, 2010, pp. 13-18)

#### **2.4.2 *Habitus***

In addition to Manuel Castells’ theory of networked society, Bourdieu’s theory of habitus was also examined in an attempt to understand how brand loyalty is developed through the use of social networks. As Bourdieu says, “the cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world are internalized, embodied social structures” (1984, p. 486). In other words Bourdieu is stating that the choices made by a consumer in their day-to-day life are influenced by the social network they are a part of – the ritual that they perform when choosing a brand or product is in fact a narrative with an ending that has already been predetermined by the social network in which the consumer resides.

In opposition to this, Anthony King’s article, ‘Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu: A ‘Practical’ Critique of the Habitus’, strongly presents an opposing argument - that Bourdieu contradicts his theory of habitus when he outlines his argument of practical theory. King states that practical theory “emphasizes virtuosic interactions between individuals” (2000, p. 417), whereas habitus states that “society consists of objective structures and determined – and isolated – individuals” (King, 2000, p. 417). He proposes that both of these theories are present in Bourdieu’s writings, however Bourdieu has presented the two conflicting theories under the same title of habitus.

Bourdieu’s theory of habitus is based on the concept of the dualism between subjectivism and objectivism, whereby the individual is either aware of their actions or is being influenced by the actions of those around them. As King describes it, “...the habitus which consists of corporal dispositions and cognitive templates overcomes subject-object dualism by inscribing subjective, bodily actions with objective social force so that the most apparently subjective individual acts take on social meaning” (2000, p. 417). This builds on Bourdieu’s definition of habitus in which he states that “the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce the habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representation” (1990a, p. 53).

For the purpose of this study, the theory of habitus was implemented to illustrate that brand loyalty is perpetuated through the consumers’ social network – that purchasing or consuming the same brands as those in the consumer’s social network is a learnt behaviour appropriate to their social standing. King explains this aspect of the habitus as it “...is derived directly from

the socioeconomic or structural position in which individuals find themselves. Thus, individuals unconsciously internalize their objective social conditions, such as their economic class, so that they have the appropriate tastes and perform the appropriate practices for that social position” (2000, p. 423). King then goes on to substantiate this statement by saying that, “...the habitus ensures that the individual will inevitably act according to the logic of the situation”<sup>11</sup> (2000, p. 243). In contrast to King’s claims, Bourdieu has a highly defined point of view when it comes to the role that habitus holds in the social world. He strongly believes that the habitus of an individual’s social network is defined by - or defines - their tastes in the world of brands and the loyalty that they hold for those brands.

However, Bourdieu also presents the idea that the threat of the integrity of the social network of a consumer can alter the habitus of their brand loyalty, as the upper classes are often ‘forced’ to adopt new fashions as their tastes are diffused by the consumption of similar brands or products amongst the ‘subordinate classes’ (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 160 – 165). Simply put, those consumers who have the luxury of economic security are able to alter their consumption pattern as the style of a brand or product which they patron begins to disseminate through mass production amongst the social networks of those that are less economically fortunate than them. Bourdieu (1984) and Wacquant (1992) examine the relationships that are present amongst consumers, stating that “what exist in the social world are relations – not interactions between agents and intersubjective ties between individuals but objective relations which exist ‘independent of individual consciousness and will’, as Marx says...In analytic terms a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration of objective relation between positions” (1992, p. 97).

King’s discussion of his exploration of the habitus presents his theory that Bourdieu does not believe in interactions amongst individuals in society, but rather that societies have become a dialogue between structure and practice (2000, p. 422). The habitus which enables consumers to maintain their brand loyalty is also detrimental to their brand consumption as according to King, “...the habitus prevents any individuals from introducing into the social structure new practices which might cause other habituses to lag behind new social realities” (2000, p. 428).

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<sup>11</sup> When referring to society and the habitus, Bourdieu states that, “[T]he principle division into logical classes which organises the perception of the social world is itself the product of the internalization of the division of social classes” (1984, p. 170). For the purpose of this study Bourdieu’s supposition will be applied to the social networks of consumers.

These suppositions by King (2000), Bourdieu (1984), and Wacquant (1992), are reflected in the work of Moschis and Mitchell, who present the viewpoint that familial influences exerted via concept-orientation are not the only contributing factors to the development of the habitus of brand loyalty in the youth. They propose that the habitus of brand loyalty can be evolved by the development of brand loyalty amongst the youth who are influenced by both their familial social network and their peer social network – the consumption of brands amongst the youth is often motivated by the need to conform to a peer accepted cultural norm (Moschis and Mitchell, 1986). King reinforces this by stating that there can be changes, however they must be independent to the habitus as any direct changes to the habitus “would require knowing individuals who would creatively rethink the principles of their actions” (2000, p. 248).

This course of action is unlikely as many consumers are deeply entrenched in the brand loyalty that they develop for certain brands, therefore acting outside of the habitus of consuming that brand would require energy that the consumer is often unwilling to expend unless motivated by an inciting event – having the relationship of trust, that a consumer holds with the brand, compromised could be regarded as just such an inciting event (Oliver, 1999). To this end, Ballester and Alemán state that “the fact that, in high involvement situations, brand trust exerts a stronger influence on customer commitment than does overall satisfaction suggests that if the managers have the objective of building and keeping long-term relationships with customers, they need to complement their satisfaction programmes with...honest communication and information about the brand, shared values, brand reputation and non-opportunistic behaviour from the part of the brand company may enhance brand trust” (2001, p. 1254).

### **Chapter 3: Rationale of Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Objectives and Research Model**

The objectives of this study were (1) to determine the role that brand loyalty holds in the decision making process undertaken by consumers when purchasing products, (2) to determine how brand loyalty is developed and maintained, and (3) to ascertain whether a consumer’s social network’s brand loyalty makes them predisposed to purchasing a certain brand or product. In order to meet these objectives, the study was undertaken in two phases. Firstly participants were chosen to participate in in-depth interviews with the aim of determining their understanding of social networks<sup>12</sup> and gaining perspective on the relationships that they hold with brands, how they view their consumption of brands, and how they share their ‘brand relationships’ with those within their social network. Secondly, the participants were asked questions in relation to a specific brand, in this case Woolworths, in order to formulate a case study or illustrative example of the participants’ brand loyalty in practice.

This two part strategy was employed so that participants could voice their understanding of brand relationships before asking them specific questions pertaining to the brand chosen for the ‘case study’. This allowed the participants’ to gain an understanding of their own role in the relationship and for them to clarify to themselves their stance on consumerism.

Beginning with generalised questions allowed for a clearer view and contextualisation of how the study would progress. It gave the interviewer a chance to determine the attitude of the participant towards the study and to adjust accordingly in order to gain as much information from them as possible.

Unfortunately some participants were not as accommodating as others when it came to sharing information that they may have found to be too personal (the illustration of their consumerism, or lack thereof), however other participants were willing to follow the interviewer’s lead and provided in depth information with regards to their consumption of brands.

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<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of the study, Wasserman and Faust’s definition of social networks is applicable; “A social network consists of a finite set of actors and the relation or relations defined on them. The presence of relational information is a critical and defining feature of a social network” (1994, p. 20).

This initial presentation of generalised questions illustrated to the participants and the interviewer, the incomprehension of the degree to which consumerism has become entrenched in the participants’ day-to-day lives. As the interview progressed participants became more aware of their relationship with brands, and how and to what extent they shared this relationship with those within their social network – both those members<sup>13</sup> on the periphery and those closer to the ‘centre’ of the subgroup.

According to Wasserman and Faust using a “...network perspective allows new leverage for answering standard social and behavioural science research questions by giving precise formal definition to aspects of the political, economic, or social structural environment” (1994, p. 3). Wasserman and Faust (1994) argue that social networks consist of actors, dyads, rational ties, triads, groups, subgroups, network, and relation. In the course of this study the participants are in the role of actors who are linked by relational ties, which can be defined by the characteristic of establishing “a linkage between a pair of actors” (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, p. 18). Other examples of relational ties as supplied by Wasserman and Faust include;

- The evaluation of one person by another (for example expressed friendship, liking, or respect)
- Transfers of material resources (for example business transactions, lending or borrowing things)
- Association or affiliation (for example jointly attending a social event, or belonging to the same social club)
- Behavioural interaction (talking together, sending messages)
- Movement between places or statuses (migration, social or physical mobility)
- Physical connection (a road, river, or bridge connecting two points)
- Formal relations (for example authority)
- Biological relationship (kinship or descent) (1994, p. 18)

### ***3.1.1 Process Characteristics***

For the purpose of this study the participant’s social networks’ that are referred to, are those of groups or subgroups which can be defined as “any subset of actors, and all ties among them” (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, p. 19). With this in mind Wasserman and Faust’s claim that

A network approach to this study would look at interactions among group members in order to better understand the decision-making process. The influences a group member has on

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<sup>13</sup> Wasserman and Faust refer to the members of social networks as ‘actors’, who they define as “discreet individuals, corporate, or collective social units...for example; people in a group” (1994, p. 17).



his/her fellow members are quite important to the process. Ignoring these influences gives an incomplete picture (1994, p. 7)

is highly appropriate as the aim of the study was to determine how a consumer’s interaction with their social network contributes to their construction of brand loyalty, and the relationship which they have with the brands that they consume. This is bearing in mind that social networks are structures that may be behavioural, social, political, or economic...thus allow[ing] a flexible set of concepts and methods with broad interdisciplinary appeal (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, p. 10).

### ***3.1.2 Sample Characteristics***

A conservative sample of fourteen to twenty white South African females between the ages of eighteen and twenty five was chosen with the intention of having more in depth, quality information, instead of gathering a large quantity of generalised information. As mentioned in the *Theoretical Framework*, this was done using a purposive sample group of those who have grown up “being digital”<sup>14</sup>. The reasoning behind this decision comes as relationships are increasingly developed and maintained via the use of digital and social media. Social networks are no longer limited to relationships that are undertaken in a physical or face-to-face setting, but rather relationships can now be maintained through the use of media. This also allows for more diverse and extended social networks as those who have interests or characteristics in common may connect and become ‘friends’ through media, maintaining a ‘relationship’ without ever physically meeting.

### ***3.1.3 Research Model Rationale***

One of the research methods employed in this study, is that of fundamental research. Kothari rationalises that fundamental research is “...concerned with generalisations and the formulation of a theory” (1985, p. 3). Had the focus of this study been different, with the goal of determining a method of increasing the brand loyalty of consumers, the method of using applied research<sup>15</sup> would have been appropriate. Applied research helps to “...identify social, economic or political trends that may affect a particular institution or the copy research (research to find out whether certain communications will be read and understood) or the marketing research or evaluation research...” (Kothari, 1985, p. 3). As such, this study could

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<sup>14</sup> See Manual Castells ‘Theory of Networked Society’ under theoretical framework in the Literature Review chapter.

<sup>15</sup> Kothari defines Applied research as “....research aimed at certain conclusions (say, a solution) facing a concrete social or business problem...” (1985, p. 3).

be evolved in the future using the alternative applied research method in order to find a solution to develop brand loyalty through consumers’ social networks further. However, in this instance the use of fundamental research for the study was appropriate as it was “finding information that has a broad base of applications and thus, adds to the already existing organized body of scientific knowledge” (Kothari, 1985, p. 3).

In addition, this study used grounded theory and sensitizing concepts in its research method approach. The grounded theory method was created and perfected by the sociologists, Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the 1960s, and according to Bowen (2006) it is the “continual interplay between data collection and analysis to produce a theory during the research process”. This statement is supported by Strauss and Corbin (1990), who claim that grounded theory is “derived inductively through the systematic collection and analysis of data”.

The use of inductive analysis in a study “means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to collection and analysis” (Patton, 1980, p.306 as cited by Bowen, 2006). Bowen claims that in order to utilize the grounded theory approach effectively, it must be used in conjunction with sensitizing concepts, which Charmaz (2003) states are “those background ideas that inform the overall research problem” (Bowen, 2006).

Sensitizing concepts were created by Blumer in 1954 and are used as interpretive devices, or the starting point for a qualitative study (Glaser, 1978; Padgett, 2004; Patton, 2002). Bowen states that when using the grounded theory approach, the sensitizing concept does not need to be tested, improved, or refined (2006).

As a result, this study employed the grounded theory approach as there was no previous discernible research in South Africa surrounding the topic. Consequently a hypothesis was not drawn prior to conducting the research, therefore making it an analytical research paper where the theory needed to emerge as the data was collected and analysed. This approach is also referred to as exploratory research by Kothari (1985). According to him, “...exploratory research is the development of hypotheses rather than their testing, whereas formalized research studies are those with substantial structure and with specific hypotheses to be tested” (Kothari, 1985, p. 4).

Regardless of the terminology used to describe the research, it is all categorized as qualitative research. The qualitative approach was used as it “...is especially important in the behavioural sciences where the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour. Through such research we can analyse the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing” (Kothari, 1985, p. 3). In trying to determine how consumers develop their brand loyalty through the use of their social networks, an approach that “...is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour” (Kothari, 1985, p. 5) was the most appropriate. In addition to this, when working with participants in a setting where the data is not necessarily tangible, “...such an approach to research generates results either in non-quantitative form or in the form which are not subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. Generally, the techniques of focus group interviews, projective techniques and depth interviews are used” (Kothari, 1985, p. 5) as was the case in this study.

As discussed, the general strategy was to approach subjects that fall into the internet age generation as defined by Manuel Castells in his networked society theory (2010, p. xviii). As mentioned previously in the overview of literature surrounding the topic of network societies and the theoretical framework, this age specification for the participants’ had been chosen as sizeable amount of the current digital generations social networking is conducted through the internet via social media and other internet gateways. This allows brands to further entrench themselves into the consumers’ day to day lives, therefore increasing the likelihood of brand loyalty through the engineering of previous experiences with the brand, and strengthening previous bonds of loyalty that are pre-existent between the consumer and the brand.

As a result of this selective process the sample used was conservative, with quality of information gathered versus quantity of information gathered taking precedence. As the influence of social media allows brands access to the day to day lives of consumers, the approach taken in choosing the sample group was reminiscent of this – the sample is comprised of young, white South Africa females between the ages of eighteen and twenty five, one of the driving demographics behind the consumer market.

In order to gain a clear understanding of the spectrum of the research, interviews were conducted and analysed. A standardized open-ended interview approach was used when gathering the data as they are “extremely structured in terms of the wording of the questions.

Participants’ are always asked identical questions, but the questions are worded so that responses are open-ended (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). This open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up” (Turner, 2010, p.756).

### **3.2 Data Collection**

#### **3.2.1 Sample**

A purposive sample was used in the case of this study as gender and age are definitive contributing factors to the results. The purpose of using this sample – female South Africans between the ages of 18 and 25 – is because the study aimed to determine the construction of brand loyalty via social networks in the emerging economic generation that was first exposed to social media<sup>16</sup>.

The sample was initially chosen from the number of students attending the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and then progressed to gathering others from various other tertiary institutes in the country via word of mouth from those that had already participated in the study. As a result, the sample consisted of young females either completing their studying career or beginning their studying or working career.

For the purpose of the study the sample group was set at a goal of conducting between twelve and twenty in depth interviews. With this in mind, twenty subjects were approached and eighteen of these subjects agreed to participate. Of those initial eighteen subjects only fourteen proceeded to participate in the study. Those that decided not to after their initial agreement either stated time constraints or simply ceased responding to the interviewer’s request for a meeting. Due to time and location constraints that some of the participants felt they were under due to work and study commitments some the interviews were conducted via email and telephone rather than face-to-face, allowing for a practical application and demonstration of different social networks in use.

Because these interviews were conducted electronically they were conducted at a time that suited the participant. Other interviews were conducted in a traditional face to face setting, with some participants allowing the interview to be filmed to allow for some diversity to the

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<sup>16</sup> Manuel Castells refers to the “generational divide between those born before the Internet Age (1967) and those who grew up being digital” in his *Networked Society Theory* (2010, p. xviii).

study’s records. The electronic interviews conducted via email, Skype and telephone were almost more successful in their illustration of social networks and the relationships that are constructed via the use of media. The email interviews had a conversational tone to them that was almost lacking in the more traditional face to face interviews as those who participated in the traditional interviews seemed to feel less comfortable than those who were answering from the safety of a technologically created distance. In those interviews that were conducted via Skype and telephone a comraderie developed between the interviewer and the participant based on the conveniences and inconveniences that are presented when using media in such a way. This speaks volumes for the types of relationships that now construct a majority of the relationships within social networks.

### ***3.2.2 Interview Questions***

As mentioned previously, the generalised questions that were initially presented to the participants allowed the interviewer to determine the participants’ familiarity of the terminology used in the study, in addition to allowing the interviewer to determine the participants’ willingness to share information regarding their consumption and relationships with brands. This initial testing of the willingness of the participants to discuss their brand consumption habitus with the interviewer allowed for any adjustments that needed to be made between the interviewer/participant relationship. The interviewer was able to adjust the way in which they approached certain participants in order to gather as much usable information from them as possible. The in depth interviews were chosen over a focus group or group interview data gathering method, for the precise reason outlined above. In the pilot study conducted, a focus group was undertaken to determine the reactions of participants to the relevant questions. In a group setting it was discovered that a few participants dominated the conversation whilst others were content to sit back and observe the others. Unfortunately this went counter to the intention of gathering quality, diverse data so the idea of a focus group was discarded despite the merits offered – a discourse amongst consumers about brands, illustrating an inadvertent social network where the brands consumed act as the relational tie.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Wasserman and Faust who state that “actors are linked to one another by social ties” (1994, p. 18) and that a “defining feature of a tie is that it establishes a linkage between...actors” (1994, p. 18).

Questions asked of the participants’ dealt with their general consumption of brands and how the relationship with the brand is shared with those in their social networks – whether the social networks be ones that they share through the use of social media (a brand’s page on Facebook), or those that contribute to their day to day lives (family members, friends, etc.). In addition to exploring the participants’ consumption and interaction with brands, the questions also delved into the relationships that brands have constructed for the individual participants – the interactions that the participants’ have with sales people, promotional people, and all the members of the brands community that contribute to the brand loyalty that has been painstakingly constructed around the brand. This line of questioning allowed the interviewer to identify a limitation that was also identified in the initial pilot study conducted – that of incorrect terminology. The topic is discussed in more detail below, but the interviewer observed that the majority of the participants’ had an incorrect understanding of the term social network - it appears that the term is assumed to be interchangeable with the concept of social media. As a result, the line of questioning that was presented to the participants clearly had to determine their understanding of the terminology before progressing further into the interview. This was so that the interviewer did not have to dispose of the interview because of data that was incorrect due to the discrepancy only being determined past a point in the interview where the information provided was irreversible.

### ***3.2.3 Limitations***

As mentioned previously, due to the time and work constraints of both the interviewer and a portion of the sample group, the initial face-to-face interviews had to be rearranged and conducted via email and telephone. Due to this many of the participants chose to no longer participate in the study as, presumably, they felt it was no longer as ‘serious’ as they initially assumed. Many of those who had agreed to participate in the study built a relationship with the interviewer via email and telephone conversations but failed to submit the answers to their interviews despite continued conversations about the topic. As a result, the sample size was significantly diminished from its initial size leading to less satisfying results despite still falling within the initial expected interview amount. A contribution to the lower accuracy and satisfaction of the results was also the conducting of 60% of the interviews via electronic platforms. The interviewer/researcher was unable to see the participants’ reactions to certain questions asked; therefore limiting any insights the interviewer may have had into the participants’ ‘feelings’ in relation to the question or topic. Likewise, as the participants’ were not in an interview face-to-face with the interviewer, they often gave very brief answers to

the questions as the interviewer was unable to lead them into going more in-depth into the question.

In addition to the communication limitations presented from the electronically conducted interviews, there was difficulty with the participants understanding the terminology used. Although the participants all have a tertiary education, common vernacular errors such as the misuse of the term social network added a significant amount of confusion to the data gathering phase of the study. In the initial pilot study conducted via the interviewer prior to proceeding with this final study, it was determined that many laymen are not familiar with the definition of a social network. The general understanding of the non-media involved populace is that the term social network is interchangeable with the term social media. This results from social media using the term ‘social network sites’ to describe one of their numerous functions. This can be seen in the explanation given by dana m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison in their 2008 research paper discussing the definition, history and scholarship of social networking sites. boyd and Ellison state about their understanding of social networks, that using “...the term ‘social network site’ to describe this phenomenon, the term ‘social networking sites’ also appears in public discourse, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. We chose not to employ the term ‘networking’ for two reasons: emphasis and scope. ‘Networking’ emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them...” (2008, p. 211). As a result, the participants’ understanding of the questions posed to them were not in accordance with what the interviewer was in fact asking. Because this incorrect use of the term had been determined previously in the pilot study already conducted, the interviewer was able to question the participants at an early stage in the interview about their understanding of the term social networks, and then guide the direction of the interview from there. This was done before the interview had progressed past the point of being unusable, due to incorrect perceptions of the questions asked.

Another interesting and unexpected observation faced, that may have placed a limitation on the study should it have had a stronger focus on the economic aspect of brand loyalty, came in the form of the small scale case study conducted at the end of each interview. The interviewer chose an ‘all purpose’ store that offers more than one category of products. This was in an attempt to create a generalised subject that the participants’ would be able to engage in. However, in the attempt to make an objective choice, Woolworths was the store

selected for the case study – the choice was made without taking into account the economic standing of the participants (students still studying or recently graduated) and as a result it became a generic question. It emerged that the majority of the participants originate from families – for the purpose of the study, viewed as social networks – that regularly shop at Woolworths. Although the discovery was an interesting one it highlighted the homogeneity, based on the backgrounds supplied by the participants’, amongst the sample group. This limits the accuracy of the results in terms of the study being able to accurately represent the sample based on gender and age within South Africa.

Despite the limitation of the sample group not being an accurate representation of the expected demographic, the case study revealed an interesting development regarding the brand loyalty that is inherited through biological social networks: many of the participants reasoned that they chose to shop at Woolworths because their female relatives had always shopped there. This will be discussed in more depth in the *Findings and Discussion* chapter of the research paper.

## **Chapter 4: Research Ethics and Informed Consent**

### **4.1 Research Ethics Model**

The approach to research ethics can be categorized into three sections, the deontological approach<sup>18</sup>, the utilitarianism approach<sup>19</sup>, and the approach of ethical scepticism<sup>20</sup>. For the purpose of research studies, the absolutist approach and the relativist approach are often disregarded in favour of the utilitarian approach which allows for more flexibility when making decisions regarding the gathering and analysis of data. When dealing with research ethics problems can emerge, however researchers should endeavour to ensure that they have remained ethical wherever possible in order to avoid any instances of ethical misconduct.

In an environment where a study will be used for professional purposes it is important to bear in mind that issues such as duplicate publications – where the same data and results are

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<sup>18</sup> The technique of identifying and applying a Universal Code when making ethical decisions

<sup>19</sup> An evaluation and collation of the drawbacks and advantages that may arise from a study will determine what course of action will be taken with regard to ethics

<sup>20</sup> The supposition that there are no universal ethical standards, but rather that ethics are correlative to individual cultures and times



published in more than one publication or journal – and partial publications is considered unethical. Partial publications involve using multiple platforms in order to publish fragments of the data gathered; although this is usually considered unethical it is accepted in cases where large volumes of data with multiple variables has been gathered, in this case it is acceptable to publish the data in various journals on the condition that it is published with unrelated research questions and results, and with the aim of facilitating scientific communication. It goes without question that any instances of cheating or ‘doctoring’ data for example, is never acceptable.

## **4.2 Research Participants**

Perhaps the most essential ethical issue in the field of research is that of the treatment of the research participants. The researcher undertakes to ensure that no harm – either psychological or physical – befalls the participants as a direct result of their participation in the study. If the researcher fails to do this, a fundamental part of the research enterprise is compromised leading to the failure of the entire venture.

In order to ensure that the study remains ethical and in the best interests of the participants and audience, the researcher designed the study around any ethical issues that may have arisen during the undertaking of the study. This includes, but is not limited to, the subtle issues that may arise from the relationship that the researcher has with the participants. The role of researcher is what could be viewed as a position of power in the relationship between the researcher and participant; therefore the onus is on the researcher to ensure that the participants – or potential participants – understand that they are free to choose not to partake in the study, or to withdraw from the study at a later date. Before the study commences it is essential that the researcher acquires signed informed consent forms before allowing any of the participants to proceed with the study.

### **4.2.1 Gatekeepers**

This study focusses on the age demographic from the age of 18 years and above. This is in order to avoid issues such as consent from gatekeepers in charge of minors. Legally, minors may not participate in studies without the consent of their guardian(s). In order for a researcher to gain the legal consent from these gatekeepers, they need to allow time for the guardians to read, consider, and then possibly decide to allow the minors in their care permission to participate in the study. In addition to this, the researcher also needs the

consent of the minor. This process can be arduous and as a result this study focussed on using a more independent source of participants.

#### ***4.2.2 Informed Consent***

When getting informed consent from the participants, it is important that the consent is written. This is referred to as active consent. Active consent ensures that there is no doubt that the researcher has permission to use the information gathered from the participants in the study. However when participants fail to return the written consent forms but continue to proceed with the study, it can be assumed by the researcher that they have granted passive consent – whereby they have not explicitly agreed to the information they are providing being used in the study, but their participation indicates that they have granted permission. However despite the participants proceeding with the study, passive consent is highly controversial and should be avoided by researchers whenever possible.

#### ***4.2.3 Participant Withdrawal***

As discussed previously, the relationship between a researcher and a participant often puts the researcher in a position of power – this can influence whether a participant feels comfortable enough to withdraw from a study. Due to cultural pressure participants can often feel that they are not able to withdraw or cannot decline taking part; this can be exacerbated by the feeling of being coerced by a researcher who is in a position of power over the participant. It is the researcher’s obligation to ensure that the participants feel that they are able to withdraw even after the study has commenced.

### **4.3 Confidentiality**

In order to ensure that no harm befalls the participants, many studies maintain the confidentiality of their participants. As a result the identity of the participants may not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher themselves, or the staff directly involved with the study. In extreme situations where studies that have the risk of harm befalling the participant should their identity be revealed, the researcher may employ the use of anonymity. In this case the identity of the participant is kept secret from everyone including the researcher.

The intent of this pilot study was to use human subjects during the research process. As a result the use of a written informed consent form was a requirement in order to protect both

the rights of the participants and the researcher. The consent forms that were provided to the participants’ needed to be clear when explaining the rights and expectations that are granted to both the participants’ and the researcher, as previous studies surrounding the use of consent forms have found that whilst many who have participated in data gathering agree that “consent forms were necessary and comprehensible and that they contained worthwhile information, the legalistic connotations of the forms appeared to lead to cursory reading and inadequate recall” (Cassileth, et al, 1980, p. 896-900). All participants were accorded the right to recant their input after the interviews had been conducted and before the report was completed and submitted. The consent form stated this clearly; however the participants’ were also verbally informed of this at the beginning of each interview so that they were fully aware of what it is they were consenting to.

The participants that took part in this study will all remain confidential whilst the identity and contact details of the researcher, their research intentions, and use of the data gathered were explained in detail to those who participated so that they had a full understanding of what it is they were taking part in. Due to the fact that the sample includes participants who are all over legal age for parental consent, there was no need for the consent of legal guardians or gatekeepers. Similarly the interviews were conducted off University property, so the consent of the various gatekeepers that would have been involved had the University property been required, was not needed.

## **Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion**

### **5.1 Social Network**

As previously explored in the review of Literature surrounding the topic of brand loyalty and social networks, it can be presumed that an alternative source of brand loyalty (other than that cultivated by the brand) can result from the inadvertent endorsement of a brand by a member or members of a consumer's social network. Those within a social network are "a set of people (or organisations or other social entities) connected by a set of social relations, such as friendship, co-working, or information exchange" (Wellman, et al., 1999, p. 75). Court, et al's 2009 study, *The Consumer Decision Journey*, examines the migration of the consumer brand relationship from one-way communication (from the brand to the consumer) to an increasingly two-way communicative relationship. As Court, et al. state, "In today's decision journey, consumer-driven marketing is increasingly important as customers seize control of the process and actively 'pull' information helpful to them" (2009, p.5). The result of this relationship evolution is the consumer's ability to make decisions regarding brand purchases based on the impressions they have formed of a brand through "conversations with friends and family" rather than simply through the impression cultivated by the brand (Court, et al., 2009, p.2). Christodoulides supports Court, et al's findings, stating in his own study on the topic, that consumers "capitalize on social networks to derive power from one another. They develop their own perspective on companies and brands, a view that is often in conflict with the image a brand wishes to convey" (2009, p142). The larger the social network that the consumer is a part of; the easier it is for them to acquire information about certain brands. As Lachman, et al. state, the "cost of acquiring information decreases with group size, and consequently the amount of information per individual increases as more information becomes 'affordable', the amount of relevant and/or worthwhile information for an individual also increases with the size of the collective to which it belongs" (2000, pp. 1289 – 1290).

An alternative term for social networks is offered by Muniz and O'Guinn, who refer to the network between consumers, as a brand community, "a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (2001, p.412). Muniz and O'Guinn believe that brand communities contribute a vital component to the construction of a brand's legacy as they perpetuate the image and reputation of a brand, therefore furthering its social construction amongst consumers (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). They dedicate a large portion of their study, *Brand Community*,

to exploring the concept of consciousness of kind before concluding that brand communities can be defined through application of the concept as well as through shared rituals and traditions and moral responsibility. Consciousness of kind appears to have originated with Gusfield (1978) in his article, *Community: A Critical Response*. In the article he describes consciousness of kind as “...the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another, and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). As discussed previously, this consciousness of kind is also a term adopted by Bender (1978), where “members feel an important connection to the brand, [and], they feel a strong connection toward one another” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 418). Cova supports Bender’s offered definition of the consciousness of kind, stating that, “the link is more important than the thing” (1997, p. 307), whereby it could be inferred that he believes that the relationship that the consumer has with their fellow consumer (a relationship that is founded in their shared loyalty to a brand) is in fact a more important than the relationship that the consumer has with brand that they are ‘loyal’ to. Muniz and O’Guinn further illustrate their support of this theory by offering a second, supportive theory; that of shared rituals and traditions. As Douglas and Isherwood state, rituals “serve to contain the drift of meanings...they are conventions that set up visible public definitions” (1979, p.65). Durkheim further consolidates this theory by adding that rituals also offer social solidarity to communities ([1915] 1965).

Members of brand communities are not always conscious of their inclusion in the brand community. Although they may have an awareness of their inclusion it is often not a conscious awareness. According to Oliver this feeling of inclusion is best demonstrated by the theory of a consumption community, where the “notion that individuals feel a sense of community when they share the same consumption values and behaviours” (1999, p. 40).

Muniz and O’Guinn’s statement, “such communities, due to the ubiquitous nature of brands, may transcend geography and may include a multitude of consumer members. These social groups may be fairly stable and committed to both the brand and the group” (2001, p. 415), does not appear to allow for the flexibility of random participation in a brand community. A consumer does not necessarily have to be an active consumer of a brand in order to be a member of a brand community. A consumer is considered to be a part of a brand community when they take part in simply perpetuating the knowledge of a brand – discussing a brand with an active consumer and therefore furthering the image and, possibly, the ongoing

consumption of the brand, constitutes an expansion of the brands social network therefore making the latent consumer a member of that network. This partially invalidates the argument of moral responsibility where Muniz and O’Guinn state that members of the brand community have a sense of duty or obligation to the brand community of which they are members. In theory, the moral responsibility that is shared by the brands social network, will inspire collective action amongst the whole as well as those members that are on the edges of the community (2001, p. 413). Muniz and O’Guinn further argue that “brand communities may form around any brand, but are probably most likely to form around brands with a strong image, a rich and lengthy history, and threatening competition (2001, p. 415). This is not limited to race, culture, or nationality, as “...brands transcend geography because media transcend geography” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413).

Many of the participants believed that a social network was analogous with social media as they regard their social media platforms as the space where they communicate with their social circle. A few of the descriptions of social networks by the participants included;

A social network is an online mechanism for social communication, which spans across a number of communication channels, from photographs, to statements, to conversations. It is a communication mechanism that has the capacity to reach further than one’s own social circle (Appendix D).

I think a social network is an online facility in order to connect with others around the world (Appendix C).

A social network is an online community forum, where you can choose to either interact or not interact with a friend or brand (Appendix E).

A social network to me is a communication platform, usually online I’d say. Free comes to mind, I feel like everything we use is free – Whatsapp, Facebook. So something that is free and online communication.

*So you feel it is a way to communicate? Do you also feel that you can have a social network that is not online – people that are in your network online, do you have a different network offline?*

That’s interesting, I would say for certain things I do. So for example, Wakkaberry. I can’t be friends with Wakkaberry, but online I can be. Maybe online I can interact with more people overseas as well. Then in reality I have friends who are also online.

*So different social networks defined by different thing?*  
Ya (Appendix K).

Although none of the above statements are necessarily incorrect, they are not quite correct either. Another definition supplied by one of the participants is a more accurate statement of a social network,

A social network is a social structure of groups of individuals or organisations. It is a network of friends, colleagues, family etc. it is the grouping of individuals via an online community, who share similar/common interests and communicate with each other (Appendix H).

Many of the participants stated frequently during the study that they discuss brands or products with their social network (friends and family), indicating that they have a strong brand loyalty to the brands they discussed as they are unconsciously increasing the trustworthiness that their social network has for that brand as they are promoting it to them. Many stated that although they do not necessarily share brand information actively, they do discuss purchases and brand or product preferences with those in their social network. It was clear that there was a definite relationship between those that stated they discussed brands and those who then purchased brands, those who claimed that they discussed brands with their social network also confirmed that they then purchased a brand (Appendix Q). During the discussions, participants claimed that the subjects most often discussed when gathering or exchanging information on a brand or product, was that of cost and of consumer satisfaction – usually to do with the quality of a product. This can be illustrated by the responses of the majority of the participants (Appendix Q) when asked why they continued to purchase products from a certain brand (Woolworths).

I have stopped shopping there once or twice because of the price. It is premium, although I feel that it is getting better, I believe that it is more competitive now than it's ever been. The Woolworths coffee, the Nescafe, is less than Pick 'n Pay by about R6 or R7 – quite a big difference. I think it is becoming more competitive and I think Woolies is the one to beat right now – quality, long lasting, and competitive prices. On that note, I trust Woolies. I'd rather go to Woolies and pay a bit extra and know that you're going to get 'throw away' food. Especially with raw food, I feel there is a lot of trust involved. You've got to trust because its raw and hasn't been cooked, with meat as well – with that you've got to trust what you're eating is good, that it's got no chemicals on the outside or worms on the inside, or buggies...it's a huge trust thing and that's why I continue...they've never let me down (Appendix K).

The service is good; the products are always reliable and good quality (Appendix M).

It is of good quality, and affordable enough to buy regularly (Appendix O).

Consistency and good products (Appendix P).

One of the aims of this research paper was to highlight the interdependence (a network) that is formed between consumers of a brand, regardless of whether it is on a local or global scale. To this aim Castells claims that “the process of globalization has accelerated the tempo of production, management, and distribution of goods and services throughout the planet...” (2010, p. xiiii). This statement proves itself in the consumption behaviour of consumers in regards to their consumption of specific brands – brands that are widespread in their popularity. The results above and the following, indicate that the aim of the study has been met. Although the results are not a true indicator of brand consumption on a global scale, they represent the consumption of a brand - that is widespread globally - at a national level.

## **5.2 Trustworthiness**

As illustrated in the overview of literature, it has been established in various academic studies surrounding the topic that the consumer is reluctant to use a brand that they do not trust. This level of trust is established via knowledge of the product and previous benign experiences with the product in question (Li and Miniard, 2006; Allan, et al., 2012). This establishment of trust between the consumer and the brand occurs over time as the consumer has an increasing number of interactions with the product, as well as through messages delivered from a ‘trustworthy’ source, in this case someone in the consumer’s social network (Li and Miniard, 2006). Christodoulides claims that “one specific strategy ... is to facilitate the creation and sharing of user generated content. This is expected to lead to stronger and deeper relationships between brands and consumers and more effective brand communities (Van den Bulte and Wuyts, 2007)” (2009, p. 142). However, this explicit trust appeal made by the brand to the consumer does not guarantee the consumer’s cooperation, unless the appeal has been issued from a source that they deem trustworthy – usually a product or source that they are familiar with. Consumers construct their perception of a brand’s trustworthiness on factors that they may not be aware of themselves. Advertisers have learned to be cautious of compromising this relationship of trust as, as discussed previously, something as simple as presenting a product along with its disclaimer can affect the relationship, as the speed at which the disclaimer is presented to the consumer may allow them to intuit whether the product is trustworthy or not (Allan, et al., 2012). As discussed in the overview of literature, Allan, et al. (2012) have conducted a study to this end examining how the consumer uses the



speed at which a product’s disclaimer is presented as a heuristic trust cue<sup>21</sup>, therefore allowing the consumer to infer from the speed of the disclaimer how important the content is. Allan, et al. (2012) established that the speed at which the disclaimer is presented to the consumer is proportional to the sum of important information being presented. The study therefore concluded that if the disclaimer is presented to the consumer at a rapid rate, the consumer determines that the advertiser is attempting to conceal important information, therefore ‘tricking’ them into buying a product that is not trustworthy (Allan, et al., 2012). This results in a consumer alienating the product, as the product is associated with a bad experience. The final result is the consumer does not form the relationship of trust with the brand that is required for the consumer to purchase the brand’s product.

This perceived ‘trickery’ by the brand appears to occur when they are attempting to ‘push’ the consumer into purchasing a product, or when they are attempting to encourage the consumer to perpetuate the brand name and image. One participant stated that she would immediately cease her relationship with a brand if they attempted to manipulate her into encouraging the relationship that other consumers had with the brand.

Competitions. Ridiculous competitions – like this and you win... that irritates me immediately. I don’t like anything that asks you to, or if you try like something and it says first you must add ten friends, then I think bugger off. That isn’t a way to start a relationship, be happy that I’m liking you – don’t ask me to go make a fool of myself to other people who might not be interested in you.

*So you feel that they compromise your trust in them by asking you to dilute the relationship by including many people?*

Ya. And also, I don’t like automatic responses. If I like a page ad I get one spam message I leave it immediately” (Appendix K)

Should the explicit trust overture made by the brand to the consumer fail, the brand’s advertiser is then left to rely on the inferential processes of the customer in order to establish a relationship of trust. These inferential processes hinge on the consumer having prior knowledge or experience with the product as mentioned previously (Li and Miniard, 2006; Hoyer and Macinnis, 2010). Thus, it can be deduced that the foundation for brand loyalty and trust is that of previous knowledge and experience of the brand or product – whether it be by product placement as Arpan, et al., claims (2006) or by physical experiences – or the

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<sup>21</sup> Refers to, “any variable whose judgemental impact is hypothesized to be mediated by a simple decision rule.” (Bargh and Uleman, 1989:216)

conveyance of a positive message regarding the brand or product through a “trustworthy” source.

This deduction is illustrated repeatedly in the findings as the participants’ state;

[I consult with] Family [before purchasing a brand]

*How often does their advice influence your decision?*

I would say that their opinion is important but I make the end decision. So probably only 50% of the time.

*So you don’t shop at specific food store, for example, because that is where your mom has always shopped?*

When it comes to ‘big ticket’ items, especially electronics, I go with the brands that my family has always used because I’ve grown up knowing that they work. I trust then and I know that my mom and dad are very careful about choosing. They don’t blow money; they will go out and do research. So I trust them (Appendix K).

Friends or family are often good to consult to see if they have heard anything about the product, good or bad

*How often does their advice influence your decision?*

If they have had negative experiences with the product then naturally I will not be eager to rush and buy it.

*Why do you think this is?*

People want products that work; they aren’t going to buy something that they know could have a problem and not work properly (Appendix M).

Sometimes. Friends, online acquaintances or family - basically anyone with experience of the product (Appendix L).

As can be determined from the above statements from participants, an exception to the construction of brand loyalty can be orchestrated via the use of role-models. This approach does not require the consumer to have previous knowledge or use of a product. This is frequently achieved through brand placement when used in association with a well-known personality (often an actor/actress or sports personality) therefore implying to the consumer that the product has been endorsed by the celebrity associated with it (Arpan, et al., 2006). This association with a seemingly ‘trustworthy’ source provides the consumer with an unfounded sense of security when considering the credibility of the associated brand, and influencing their purchase behaviour (Li and Miniard, 2006). Halim (2011) concludes that this relationship can be regarded as one with a high-quality level of trust between the consumer and a product, thus affirming the consumer’s intent to purchase the product

repeatedly. This display is a physical representation of the positive relationship they have with the brand. As Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), Pessemier (1959), and Reichheld (1996); cited in Chaudhuri and Holbrook, state, “brand-loyal consumers may be willing to pay more for a brand because they perceive some unique value in the brand that no alternative can provide” (2001, p. 81). As seen in Appendix Q, the majority of the participants stated that they only feel the need to discuss a brand or product with their social network when they are unsure of it. In other cases where they are familiar with the brand, either from previous personal use or via information exchanged within the social network, they do not feel the need to consult with others prior to purchase. As one participant stated when asked if she consulted with someone before purchasing a brand or product,

Not normally when purchasing a brand as I would have knowledge about the brand via their marketing in order to make my decision. However, definitely when purchasing a specific product (and the aspect of various brands plays a role here). I will consult with someone who has an unbiased view and general knowledge about the product or brand; or someone who has tested or had an experience with the product/brand (Appendix H).

The above statement and the following below, give credence to Court, et al’s., claim that “In today’s decision journey, consumer-driven marketing is increasingly important as customers seize control of the process and actively ‘pull’ information helpful to them” (2009, p.5).

[I choose to purchase a new brand] based on whether they connect with me, or how much they have differentiated themselves, or depending on if what they promise is attractive to me personally! (Appendix E).

[I choose to purchase a new brand] usually on its quality (like in clothing) or on its packaging (make up, food) (Appendix F).

[I choose to [purchase a new brand] mainly through asking around and getting suggestions of brands, and whichever brand has the highest following or the highest recommendation. Or by asking someone I know will have knowledge in the area (Appendix H).

In this case the consumers have ‘pulled’ enough information over time, allowing them to make an informed decision about purchasing a product. Should a consumer feel they are not well enough equipped with sufficient information to make an informed decision, they are able to gather or ‘pull’ information to them easily via their social network. However, the information gathered is often not enough for the consumer. When the participants were

confronted with the question of whether they would trust a brand enough to purchase products online, the majority of them stated that they had tried it but much preferred purchasing products from a physical store as they felt it allowed them to ascertain whether the quality of the product was up to their standards. Many of the participants also stated that they enjoyed the instant gratification they acquired from purchasing a product and being able to enjoy it immediately rather than waiting for delivery from an online purchase.

Brand loyalty relies heavily on the trust that a consumer places in the brand and the product that is produced, as such brand communities play an integral role in maintaining the relationship of trust between the brand and the consumer. Muniz and O’Guinn argue that this is because “the postmodern consumer is in fact quite self-aware and self-reflexive about issues of authenticity and identity” (2001, p.415).

### **5.3 Social Media**

When participants were asked if they were members of brand ‘pages’ on social media networks, 100% of them stated that they were (Appendix Q). Although the majority of them did not supply a specific social media, Facebook was the one mentioned. This connectivity with a brand via social media indicates an extended social network, although the members of the brand’s social media network do not know each other personally, they are all a part of the extended social network that has formed around that specific brand. This can be seen when participants were asked to indicate why they would choose to ‘like’ or ‘follow’ a brand, as one participant stated she makes the decision based on;

Who else follows the brand, the amount of good feedback they receive, how often they interact with the public, how they handle their negative feedback and the amount of ‘likes’ they have on their page (Appendix H).

The majority of the participants stated that the deciding factor for them was the interaction the brand had with its ‘followers’, however ironically more than half of them stated that they had never actually interacted with the brand on a social media platform after deciding to ‘follow’ them. One participant stated that they had had interactions with the brand, Wakkaberry, via Facebook and it had been a positive experience that she felt contributed to the relationship of trust between herself and the brand.

I would share on Wakkaberry’s page, like I had a bowl of your happiness today, but that is just interaction with a brand. I wouldn’t publicly make a status about purchasing, purely because it’s no one’s business and I don’t feel that it’s an interesting status (Appendix K).

*Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site?*

Wakkaberry

*If so, did they respond?*

Yes

*Was it a positive or negative experience? How did this colour your perception and further interactions with the brand?*

Yes it is always positive interaction. But I feel like because I have had a relationship with the brand now if there was a negative experience, I could go to them and tell them that I’ve had a bad experience. I feel like they would make it right.

*So it increases your trust in them because they’ve been so forthcoming with you?*

Ya, it’s exactly that. So I would tell them if something was going wrong with their brand (Appendix K).

The remainder of the participants said that they would not ‘follow’ or ‘like’ a brand’s page, or attempt an interaction with them if they thought they may not get a response. This indicates that the brand loyalty that those participants hold for the brand is fragile, the interaction that they engage in with the brand, is their way of testing the brands commitment to the ‘relationship’ that they have with them. However this ‘following’ of brands does not happen automatically, every one of the participants stated that they would only support a brand via social media if it really interested them. If they felt the brand had nothing to offer them, they would skip over looking at its page regardless of whether or not members of their social network were interacting with it. One of the reasons offered for choosing not to follow a brand’s page was;

Competitions. Ridiculous competitions – like this and you win... that irritates me immediately. I don’t like anything that asks you to, or if you try like something and it says first you must add ten friends, then I think bugger off. That isn’t a way to start a relationship, be happy that I’m liking you – don’t ask me to go make a fool of myself to other people who might not be interested in you (Appendix K).

For those that stated that they chose to follow brands on a social media site, the biggest ‘draw’ was the proffering of free products by the brand and an active ‘page’ (i.e. network).

If I saw thirty people had suddenly like a page then I will like it too to see what the hype is about...I will see what the interaction is, again value – do they do specials, what do they give you to follow them. What value do they add to your life? (Appendix K).

Therefore when sharing information via social networks the more people that are in the network, the less costly the sharing of information will be. As Christodoulides states, “while the internet enables consumers to express their identity and reinforce their individuality through personalization and customization, it also allows them to satisfy their social needs through sharing of consumption related experiences”. (2009, pp. 142 – 143).

A consumer of the brand, and therefore a member of the brand community, does not necessarily need to be an active consumer of the brand. As determined above when discussing social networks, simply partaking in a discussion about a brand and then spreading the information via word of mouth or discussions on a social media page - and therefore indirectly furthering the image and consumption of a brand - would make a non-direct consumer a member of that brand community via virtue of expanding the brands consumer social network. In the current online atmosphere it is easier for brands to expand their social networks by raising awareness amongst non-direct consumers through the use of social media, such as Facebook or Twitter. Muniz and O’Guinn claim that consumers feel a sense of moral responsibility to the brand community or social network which they are connected to. However, a consumer’s ability to choose whether or not they are going to participate in an interaction or relationship with a brand online indicates that this sense of moral responsibility that they supposedly hold is not obligatory. However, for those that do choose to participate in this mass interaction with a brand via social media, are defined by Muniz and O’Guinn as partaking in a trend towards neo-tribalism, where the community is “experiencing a decline in individualism” (2001, p. 414). Muniz and O’Guinn draw on Shields to further consolidate this observation, as Shields states that a consumer who is engaged in this trend of neo-liberalism within their brand community or social network, is “experiencing the reaggregation of hyperindividualist society in the form of “heterogeneous fragments, the remainders of mass consumption society” (1996, p. x)” (2001, p. 414).

#### **5.4 Age**

The age of the participants was paramount to the study as it gives a general idea of the purchase behaviour and brand loyalty of the current generation of consumers. Castells’ theory of a networked society was important in framing the results of this study as it helped to provide a guide for the results. The current information generation relies heavily on social media as a platform for social networks. Many of the ‘friends’ that are part of the social

network on social media have never actually met face-to-face, or even had a conversation over the telephone. As a result social networks are extended yet weak as there is no ‘real’ relationship between members. However, this social network is still crucial to the creation of brand loyalty amongst consumers as there is a constant exchange of information via social media platforms pertaining to specific brands. This allows consumers to construct brand loyalty based on information from other consumers within this extended social network.

Castells’ theory of a networked society provided a framework for the results determined from the ages of the participants, as it enabled the examination of the shift away from the individual to “the network society...the social structure resulting from the interaction between the new technological paradigm and social organisation at large” (Castells, 2005, p. 4). One of the points Castells discusses in his book, *The Rise of the Network Society*, is that of the connection between local and global, as he states this is “the key spatial feature of the network society” (2010, p. xxxv). Part of the aim of this study was to illustrate the connections formed (a network) between consumers, whether it be on a local or global scale. An illustration of this global use of a product can be seen in the example provided by Bernoff and Li (2008), who assert that “a community of consumers who use Web 2.0 applications to get the things they need from one another, rather than from companies, is further shifting the balance of power from firm to consumer (Bernoff and Li, 2008)...‘There are no secrets. The networked market knows more than companies do about their own products. And whether the news is good or bad, they tell everyone’” (Levine et al., 2001, as cited by Christodoulides, 2009, p.142). This provides a compelling support for Castells’ claim that “the process of globalization has accelerated the tempo of production, management, and distribution of goods and services throughout the planet...” (2010, p. xiii). A claim that is unequivocally illustrated via the routine consumption of the same brand by consumers on a global scale.

As such it can be said that the theory of a networked society was important in aiding the study in determining the future economic generation. The age group of the sample used falls into what Castells refers to as those that “grew up being digital” (2010, p. xviii); a generation that is very different to that of the generation prior to the digital age. The current generation conducts many of its relationships via technological platforms, sometimes never physically meeting those that they claim as their ‘friends’. Because this study examined social networks amongst this age group (18 – 25years), as well as employed social media as a network and

platform for the development of brand loyalty, this theory was essential to guiding the study and ensuring that the concept of the social network does not become misplaced.

This examination of the current economic generation leads to the examination of social networks closer to home. Although it has been discussed that many of the ‘friends’ that consumers connect with through the social network of brand consumption are solely an online presence, there are those within the social network constructed by the brand, that are a physical presence within the consumer’s network. The influence exerted on the participants by those within their immediate social network, but from older generation who have already established their brand loyalty, appears to be unexceptional but definitely present.

When it comes to big ticket items, especially electronics, I go with the brands that my family has always used because I’ve grown up knowing that they work. I trust then and I know that my mom and dad are very careful about choosing. They don’t blow money; they will go out and do research. So I trust them (Appendix K).

Moschis and Mitchell (1986), account for the unexceptional influence of parental or familial members within a consumer’s social network, by stating that familial/parental influence via concept-orientation is not the only factor that contributes to the formation of purchase behaviour/brand loyalty amongst the youth. There is also the characteristic of needing to fit into a peer accepted cultural norm to contend with. This factor could be tempered by the presence of other familial members of the current economic generation within the consumer’s immediate social network. As one participant stated about those that influence her purchase behaviour,

It would probably be my twin sister. Because she’s at home, so when I get home with all my purchases I will tell her what I’ve got. So definitely probably the person I live with would be the person that I share that kind of stuff with. Otherwise, best friends and my mom (Appendix K)

This factor confirms the supposition that the youth are often influenced into buying products that illustrate their participation in the cultural norm via product ownership. Thus it can be determined that consumer purchase behaviour is an attribute that is learnt via interpersonal communications taught by the parental, peer, and environmental influences that encompass the youth of the current economic generation from a young age.



## 5.5 Habitus

Bourdieu’s theory of habitus lends an additional framework to the study when determining how brand loyalty is developed through the use of social networks. As Bourdieu states, “the cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world are internalized, embodied social structures” (1984, p. 486). As previously determined, and supported by Bourdieu, the choices made by a consumer in their day-to-day life are guided by the social network they are a part of – the ‘ritual’ that they undertake when selecting a brand or product is in essence a predetermined narrative, where the final result or choice has already been determined by their social network. This is illustrated in the results that were determined when examining the theme of age in the findings of this study. Many of the participants state that they discussed their purchases, or were influenced in their purchase behaviour, by friends and family. Although it was determined in the Age category that the influence was nominal – or unexceptional – it cannot be ignored. As such it can be stated that the influence that is exerted by those within a consumer’s immediate social network, is a factor of habitus.

*When and why did you first become a customer of this brand (Woolworths)?*

Since birth, my mother is a loyal customer (Appendix P).

Since I was a little girl because my mom bought our food from there (Appendix N).

As long as I can remember - my mom is a Woolworths customer. I inherited the brand (Appendix K).

My family has always shopped there (Appendix J).

For as long as I can remember, my mom has always shopped there (Appendix D).

As examined in the discussion of the category of age – the factor of age and of habitus formed by familial influences, are closely linked – Moschis and Mitchell (1986) discuss the suppositions of King, Bourdieu, and Wacquant, who argue that familial influences exerted via concept-orientation are only one of multiple contributing components in the development of the habitus of brand loyalty in the youth. The proposal that the evolution of the habitus of brand loyalty is inextricably linked to the development of brand loyalty amongst the youth,

who are governed by both their familial social network and their peer social network, is a defining component of the argument.

King reinforces the notion that the habitus of brand loyalty and the development of brand loyalty are linked, by stating that although there can be changes to a consumers habitus, they must be independent to the habitus as any direct changes to the habitus “would require knowing individuals who would creatively rethink the principles of their actions” (2000, p. 248). It can be inferred based on Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of habitus that this course of action (change) is unlikely as many consumers are deeply entrenched in the brand loyalty that they develop for certain brands, therefore acting outside of the habitus of consuming that brand would require energy that the consumer is often unwilling to expend unless motivated by an inciting event – having the relationship of trust, that a consumer holds with the brand, compromised could be regarded as just such an inciting event. As one participant stated when asked if the brand (Woolworths) could be improved upon in order to make their purchase experiences more enjoyable, or if they had considered changing to a different brand; “I’m not sure what you mean- I love Woolies anyways!” (Appendix P).

The habitus which enables consumers to maintain their brand loyalty is also detrimental to their brand consumption as according to King, “...the habitus prevents any individuals from introducing into the social structure new practices which might cause other habituses to lag behind new social realities” (2000, p. 428).

As discussed in the overview of literature, Anthony King’s article, ‘Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu: A ‘Practical’ Critique of the Habitus’, offers an opposing argument, whereby he states that Bourdieu contradicts his own theory of habitus in the construction of his argument of ‘Practical Theory’. According to King, practical theory “emphasizes virtuosic interactions between individuals” (2000, p. 417), whereas habitus states that “society consists of objective structures and determined – and isolated – individuals” (King, 2000, p. 417). He proposes that although both of these theories are present in Bourdieu’s writings, Bourdieu has presented the two conflicting theories under the same title - that of habitus. In contrast to King’s claims Bourdieu has a highly defined point of view when it comes to the role that habitus holds in the social world. He determines that the habitus of an individual’s social network is defined by - or defines - their tastes in the world of brands and the loyalty that they hold for those brands. This opinion is supported by the findings

presented above, that of the participants' habitus with regards to their purchase behaviour towards the brand of Woolworths.

Bourdieu's theory of habitus is based on the concept of the dualism between subjectivism and objectivism, whereby the individual is either aware of their actions or is being influenced by the actions of those around them. As King describes it, "...the habitus which consists of corporal dispositions and cognitive templates overcomes subject-object dualism by inscribing subjective, bodily actions with objective social force so that the most apparently subjective individual acts take on social meaning" (2000, p. 417). As can be seen from the participants' quotes above, the consumer is aware that they are influenced by those around them when deciding to purchase products from the brand discussed (Woolworths). As such it can be concluded that the participants are all part of a certain habitus or purchase behaviour – a habitus that has been influenced by their social network - with regards to brand loyalty.

This substantiates Bourdieu's definition of habitus in which he states that "the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce the habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representation" (1990a, p. 53).

The implementation of the theory of habitus with regards to this study has illustrated that brand loyalty is perpetuated through the consumers' social network – that purchasing or consuming the same brands as those in the consumer's social network is a learnt behaviour appropriate to their social standing. In the case of this study, the example of Woolworths unintentionally, yet conveniently, highlighted the homogenous backgrounds of the participants. King clarifies this feature of the habitus as it "...is derived directly from the socioeconomic or structural position in which individuals find themselves. Thus, individuals unconsciously internalize their objective social conditions, such as their economic class, so that they have the appropriate tastes and perform the appropriate practices for that social position" (2000, p. 423). King then goes on to substantiate this statement by saying that,

“...the habitus ensures that the individual will inevitably act according to the logic of the situation”<sup>22</sup> (2000, p. 243).

The concept of habitus is what Oliver (1999) refers to as the third phase, or the action phase of brand loyalty. He claims that this phase of brand loyalty indicates that “the consumer has generated the focused desire to re-buy the brand and only that brand and also has acquired the skills necessary to overcome threats and obstacles to this quest” (Oliver, 1999, p. 37). Oliver presents the argument that consumers in this phase of brand loyalty will automatically ‘tune out’ the competitive messages directed at them by competing brands, and will determinedly ‘search out’ the brand of their choice, bypassing all others (Oliver, 1999). This statement is supported by the majority of the participants who asserted that they anticipated remaining a consumer of the brand despite some misgivings they had.

*Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?*

If they manage to maintain what they’ve got going and manage to keep their prices competitive, I will. But as I said, I’m skeptical. When and if they finally reveal what they put in their foods to make them last, I will double think it. Because I feel like there’s a bit of...

*So you have a niggle?*

I do, it’s not natural. It’s great, convenient, but there is something unnatural about Woolies’ food and that’s not the way I feel like I’m moving. Definitely more conscious about what I’m putting into my body” (Appendix K).

Oliver claims that once consumers have entered this phase of loyalty, only an immensely dissatisfying experience, or unavailability of the brand, will propel the consumer into trying an alternative brand and/or product (Oliver, 1999). Oliver states that, “the action loyal consumer has a deep commitment to repurchase, so much so that behaviour may be guiding itself in some habituated manner” (1999, p. 38). This observation has a strong parallel to Bourdieu’s theory of habitus<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> When referring to society and the habitus, Bourdieu states that, “[T]he principle division into logical classes which organises the perception of the social world is itself the product of the internalization of the division of social classes” (1984, p. 170). For the purpose of this study Bourdieu’s supposition will be applied to the social networks of consumers.

<sup>23</sup> Bourdieu defines habitus as “the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce the habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representation” (1990a, p. 53).

## 5.6 Homophily

The argument of a networked society (Manuel Castells) and habitus (Bourdieu) are equally applicable to the concept of homophily, as they are to the other findings previously discussed. As previously determined, Castells bases his theory of a networked society on the connection between the local and the global. He argues that this is because “the key spatial feature of the network society is the networked connection between the local and the global” (Castells, 2010, p. xxxv). After examining this theory in the categories of *Age* and *Social Networks*, it has been demonstrated that Castells’ claim that “the process of globalization has accelerated the tempo of production, management, and distribution of goods and services throughout the planet...” (2010, p. xiii) is accurate. Participants were unanimous in their support of Woolworths, a global brand, indicating a global homophily of their purchase behaviour. This homophily is also illustrated in the purchase behaviour illustrated by the sample group and the social networks to which they are connected. It could be stated that the homophily that the participants display is a product of habitus. As previously mentioned, the theory of habitus was implemented with regards to the study conducted in order to illustrate that brand loyalty is perpetuated through the consumers’ social network – that purchasing or consuming the same brands as those in the consumer’s social network is a learnt behaviour appropriate to their social standing.

An unintentional, yet convenient discovery during the course of the study was the connection shared amongst the participants – the discovery that they were from similar backgrounds in terms of the established brand loyalty amongst the elder generation in their immediate social networks. This discovery is supported by King’s interpretation of the habitus, which as discussed previously, he explains is “derived directly from the socioeconomic or structural position in which individuals find themselves. Thus, individuals unconsciously internalize their objective social conditions, such as their economic class, so that they have the appropriate tastes and perform the appropriate practices for that social position” (2000, p. 423). In opposition to King’s claims, Bourdieu has a highly defined point of view with regards to the role that habitus holds in the social world. He determines that the habitus of an individual’s social network is defined by - or defines - their tastes in the world of brands and the loyalty that they hold for those brands. Taking this into account, Bourdieu presents the notion that the threat of the integrity of the social network of a consumer can alter the habitus of their brand loyalty, as the upper classes are often ‘forced’ to adopt new fashions as their tastes are diffused by the consumption of similar brands or products amongst the ‘subordinate

classes’ (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 160 – 165). Therefore, those consumers who have the luxury of economic security are in a position to alter their consumption pattern as the style of a brand or product which they patron, begins to disseminate through mass production amongst the social networks of those that are less economically fortunate than them. However, taking into account McPherson, et al’s (2001) definition of homophily it can be stated that the habitus of consumption between the two economic classes (both before and after altering their consumption behaviour) creates a connection between the two. This therefore indicates that homophily is at work.

The results to the question of whether or not the participants ‘followed’ the same brands on social media sites as those in their social network were a unanimous ‘yes’ (Appendix Q). Those that provided a reason stated that they believed it was because they had similar interests to those that they interact with. McPherson, et al., calls this “homophily”, where “similarity breeds connection. This principle - the homophily principle – structures network ties of every type, including marriage, friendship, work, advice, support, information transfer, exchange, co membership, and other types of relationships” (2001, p. 415). In this case the homophily is caused by an information transfer as well as friendship as many of the participants stated that they were friends with those that they shared information on brands with. This active trend of homophily partially invalidates the argument of moral responsibility where Muniz and O’Guinn state that members of the brand community have a sense of duty or obligation to the brand community of which they are members. In theory, the moral responsibility that is shared by the brand’s social network, will inspire collective action amongst the whole as well as those members that are on the edges of the community (2001, p. 413). However, homophily is at work regardless of whether the members of a brand community, or social network, act on this perceived moral responsibility. To this end Muniz and O’Guinn state that consumers are part of a trend towards neo-tribalism, where the community is “experiencing a decline in individualism” (2001, p. 414). They argue that “these brand communities may form around any brand, but are probably most likely to form around brands with a strong image, a rich and lengthy history, and threatening competition (2001, p. 415). This is not limited to race, culture, or nationality, as “...brands transcend geography because media transcend geography” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). As such it can be stated that homophily is at work amongst brand communities or social networks as the members of these networks are connected due to a similarity in their consumption behaviour.

### **5.7 Case Study: Woolworths**

Woolworths has “over 400 stores across the country and revenues of over R23-billion, it has a 15% share of the clothing market and a 9% market share of the food sector” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). Woolworths CEO, Simon Susman, states about consumers’ perception of his brand, “You judge your view of Woolies on the products that we create, design and sell to you” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010).

When the participants were asked to apply everything they had discussed previously in general terms, to a specific brand, that of Woolworths, their previous answers were neatly illustrated. It can be demonstrated that the majority of the participants inherited their brand loyalty from their parents as they claim to have been purchasing the Woolworths products their entire lives or at the very least, the entirety of their employed career. This indicates an aspect of Bourdieu’s habitus, whereby the purchase behaviour of the consumer is perpetuated via their social network. Many of the participants stated that they remain loyal customers because of the quality and value of the products offered by the brand, and that they feel they have never been disappointed with any of their purchases. One of the statements by a participant that illustrates this is; “I like to buy something that will last and Woolworths constantly delivers. The clothing, handbags, shoes etc. are always fashionable and well made” (Appendix F).

The participants felt that there were competitors to the brand but believed that there was no danger of them losing their brand loyalty to Woolworths as they felt that as a brand it suited them well. This indicates a very strong brand loyalty that has been formed within the participants over many years with a significant amount of positive reinforcement through good experiences with the brand. A contributing factor to this strong brand loyalty is that of the habitus of inherited loyalty via the participants close social network (family and friends). This brand loyalty will be passed on through information exchange via social networks over the generations. As stated by the participants, if they had to recommend the brand to someone they would say;

The products are quality, you may be paying more but you are getting high quality products. It is a pleasure to shop there and the staff are friendly (Appendix H).

I would recommend it and I would probably mention the clothing, shoes etc. and the high quality food products. I have also always had fantastic service with them (Appendix F).

In a media release issued by the University of Pretoria the succinct statement was made, “Put a group of people together, ask them what their favourite purchase from Woolworths is, and very quickly they can tell you what items they enjoy and associate with the brand. Whether it is a fruit smoothie, a Woolworths roast chicken or a T-shirt from the Trenery label, the company’s brand is recognised and supported by many South Africans” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). The basis for this statement was evident during the course of the study, as participants were asked to apply certain questions to the Woolworths brand. The participants were quick to respond to the questions posed about the brand, as the relationship that they have with Woolworths is a strong one. When asked to respond with the impressions that came to mind when asked about the brand, participants responded;

Quality, black and white, clean, long lasting, clothing and food – I bought this onion, it’s a ridiculous story, but you have to hear me out. A peeled onion from Woolies – you know you get a bag of peeled onions – I bought it six weeks ago and I just cut open the onion – perfect! And put it into a salad, it tasted as fresh as the day I bought it. it made me think that Woolies is all great and well, but what the hell are they putting in that food to make it last?! A peeled onion lasts six weeks! So long lasting definitely (Appendix K).

Quality and reliable, as well as good quality (Appendix O).

Happy (Appendix N).

The construction and sustainability of any brand’s image on a long-term basis is challenging, especially when encountering competition from various sides in addition to facing a harsh economic climate. Woolworths faces these difficulties on a daily basis, however they continue to remain successful in the branding sphere. Woolworths CEO, Simon Susman, stated at a forum at the University of Pretoria’s Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), that the aspect of how a brand “sees its role in the society we live in” is a factor in constructing and maintaining a sustainable brand (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). However, Woolworths has been successful in this ‘role’ that it fulfills in society as it has remained committed to adhering to a demarcated set of values. Susman states that these values – encompassing “quality, value for money, providing excellent service, innovation, integrity, energy and ultimately sustainability” – that Woolworths upholds, is what sets the company apart from its competitors (Gordon Institute



of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). As demonstrated above, consumers are aware of these values, indicating that the relationship between the consumer and the brand is in fact one of two way communication as argued by Court, et al. (2009). Susman states that “These values have [become] entrenched in the psyche of our organisation, and increasingly in the psyche of our supplier base” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010).

According to Susman, Woolworths has a strategy known as the ‘Good Business Journey’. The strategy aims to accomplish four key priorities, to “accelerate transformation, drive social development, enhance its environmental focus and address climate change” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). The strategy is in place in order to ensure the success of the brand. To this end, Susman states that is “integrated from the ground up in the organisation. If we do this properly we absolutely fatten our brand. If we make our business sustainable we add a depth to the brand, some of which touches our customers, all of which touches our internal stakeholders” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). The impact of this policy is felt by the consumers as is demonstrated from the quotes presented in the appendices; the majority of the participants infer that the ‘Woolworths’ brand and ‘quality’ are synonymous with each other. Michael Goldman, senior lecturer in marketing at GIBS, explains the success of these four values by stating that “Strong consumer brands are often built through a single-minded and unapologetic focus on a set of values that resonate with the chosen target market segment. The addition of sustainability as Woolies' seventh employee and brand value marks an impressive revitalisation of the brand, and bodes well for their ongoing premium positioning” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010).

The strategy has had multiple benefits within the brand organisation which include exciting innovations within the brand community. The goal of social development has led to the establishment of the MySchool programme, which has had major success. According to Susman, “the company gives a small portion, around 0,6%, of a customer’s purchase to a school of his or her choice. The programme raised over R25-million for schools last year alone” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). In addition to the MySchool Programme, Woolworths has also implemented a ‘Farming for the Future’ initiative. The initiative began with one of Woolworths’ largest tomato suppliers who began experimenting with ways to improve their soil condition and crop yields via the creative use

of composts (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). Based on the success in that department, the brand began promoting similar practices amongst its other produce suppliers, which in turn led to a drive towards contributing to a sustainable environment and reducing the brand’s impact on climate change (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010).

This emphasis on contributing towards a sustainable environment has, according to Susman, “led to innovations such as the introduction of a new heating and cooling system in the new Woolworths store in Claremont, Cape Town” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). This implementation of a new heating and cooling system was in response to complaints received from customers with regards to the cold temperatures in Woolworths’ stores. As a result, “the company has introduced a system that removes warm air from the store, traps it in water and pumps it through 5.3km of under floor piping” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). Susman argues that these goals are not “a passing phase” but rather consumers “are going to value businesses that think this way, and [behave] this way into the future,” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). This observation by Susman is supported by the declarations of the participants in the study, when asked how their experience of the brand could be improved;

Have to give that a thought. I think their stocking is a bit of a problem – they have a huge range of products that they offer, but because it’s so huge it’s always haphazard about stocking their stores. So I have to go to a huge Woolies if I want an exotic thing that they offer which is quite annoying I think, because I get used to something at Woolies. They also chop and change, always redoing and renewing their products when you really like it and then suddenly it’s gone off the shelves. So I think maybe warning if they do change a product, I would like to get warning and get a chance to say ‘no please don’t because I love it’. So maybe more interaction (Appendix K).

As of yet, I have had a great experience at the store and have yet to think something needs to be improved (Appendix H).

I need to earn more money to buy more from them! (Appendix G).

I can’t think of a way it could be improved (Appendix F).

““The values carried through the ‘Good Business Journey’, particularly that of sustainability, has driven completely different thinking within the organisation and has led to a great deal of innovation within the business” said Susman. “It translates into what I term the ‘fat brand’, a

brand that has raised value to our customers and to our stakeholders in the long term” (Gordon Institute of Business Science: University of Pretoria, 2010). The impact made innovations that the brand has implemented during the “Good Business Journey” strategy can be measured in the statements made by the participants when asked if they would continue to be consumers of the brand in the future, and if they would recommend it to others as a reputable brand.

I would recommend it and I would probably mention the clothing, shoes etc. and the high quality food products. I have also always had fantastic service with them (Appendix F).

The products are quality, you may be paying more but you are getting high quality products. It is a pleasure to shop there and the staff are friendly. Yes (Appendix H).

Yes, I would recommend it. I would tell others about the services offered- the ability to be able to buy good food and clothing quality, the efficient and friendly service that is offered (Appendix I).

I feel like I don’t need to say anything because everyone knows quality and Woolworths go hand in hand. The brand speaks for itself and it’s done a very good job of making sure everyone knows what it is. But if they didn’t, I would recommend it and its products, the new products that come out of Woolies, I love! Everything is from Woolies, my water bottle; even my handbag is from Woolies (Appendix K).

The various connections that can be seen amongst Woolworths’ suppliers, consumers, and employees, all contribute to the social network of the brand. The consumers who partook in the study are members of this brand community based on the connection that they share with the suppliers, employees, and other consumers, via the Woolworths brand. This network of connections, illustrates the application of Manuel Castells’ theory of networked society.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Conclusion with Regards to Research Question 1**

The strong brand loyalty that is illustrated by the participants' indicates that brand loyalty can be constructed via a social network. As could be seen in the results of the study, the participants' illustrate a consciousness of kind when their purchase behaviour is examined (Appendix Q). This consciousness of kind is a component of the consumption community of which the participants' form a pertinent section.

Despite some consumers being 'non-active' in their role in a brands consumer community, they are still members of a social network that is formed by the dissemination of information with regards to the brand. This occurs as the brand's 'trustworthiness' is constantly getting boosted as the members of a social network exchange information and reassurances as to a brand's quality and value.

Consumers have a stronger relationship and therefore brand loyalty to a brand should they be active consumers of the brand or its products. In addition to this, the trustworthiness with which a consumer regards a brand also contributes to the strength of the relationship.

### **6.2 Conclusion with Regards to Research Question 2**

Trustworthiness is constructed through a consumer's previous positive experiences with a brand, or through the perception held of a brand by the consumer's immediate social network – namely friends and family. A consumer's immediate social network can strengthen the relationship that a consumer has with a brand by building the trustworthiness that a consumer has in the brand.

### **6.3 Concluding Remarks**

The results of this study as discussed above, determined that this was done via discussion amongst the brands consumer community. 100% of the participants in this study stated that they were connected to brands via social media. This indicates that they are part of a wider social network, formed by the global connections that can be established via the internet. As such it can be claimed that a brand that has an internet presence also has a consumer community that has some measure of homophily.

The participants’ stated that when entering into this online social network, they first determined whether the brand interacted with its ‘followers’. This observation illustrates how a consumer forms part of the trust relationship with a brand; consumers are unwilling to make an emotional investment in a brand if they feel they are not going to be valued. The importance of noting the development of online relationships between a brand and a consumer are evident when one takes into account Castells’ theory of a networked society.

The participants’ in this study had a strong online presence with many of their relationships conducted through the use of technology, and therefore social media platforms, rather than physical social interaction. As a result, the brands they consume have evolved in order to have a strong online presence which aids in disseminating information about the brand. This creates the perception amongst consumers’ of previous experience with the brand. Therefore, brands utilise the platform of social media to create a space in which consumers’ can join a brand’s global social network.

Another defining factor when examining Age in relation to the formation of brand loyalty is that of familial influence. A young consumer relies heavily on parental guidance when ‘inheriting’ a relationship of trust with a brand. However, there are also the familial connections between young consumers in the same age demographic, therefore allowing a young consumer to gain both current knowledge from the brand and ‘historical’ knowledge from older members of their familial social network. This ‘inheritance’ of a brand is referred to by Bourdieu as habitus. The habitus of consuming certain brands is formed by a consumer’s immediate social network, namely family and friends. Breaking the habitus of consuming a certain brand usually only occurs due to an inciting event like the fragmenting of the relationship of trust between the consumer and the brand. The loyalty that a consumer has to a brand can be compromised by the same system of a social network, as the information exchange has a strong impact on the behaviour of the consumers. Should a member of a social network share a negative experience they have had with a brand, the information will travel quickly amongst the network and as the information is coming from within a trusted social network, those within the network will cease to trust in the brand and therefore there is the possibility that they will stop purchasing it. In addition to this, a brand can also lose its relationship of trust with a consumer, should the consumer perceive that the brand is attempting to ‘trick’ them, or if the brand makes the consumer feel undervalued or threatened.

As a result it can be seen that social networks play a crucial role in the construction and maintenance of brand loyalty amongst consumers. As Christodoulides claims, brands are no longer in control of the information that is communicated about their products, as the consumers “develop their own perspective on companies and brands, a view that is often in conflict with the image a brand wishes to convey” (2009, p142). This, Court et al., states is due to the relationship between brands and consumers having moved away from one-way communication – from brands to consumers – to a relationship that is formed by an increasingly two-way conversation (2009), therefore allowing a generation of consumers sharing information amongst themselves via networks, to empower themselves to make conscious decisions surrounding their purchase behaviour and brand loyalty.

#### **6.4 Future Research**

Future studies based on the information gathered in this research paper, could be undertaken with the goal of determining a method of increasing the brand loyalty of consumers. Should that be the case, the method of using applied research<sup>24</sup> would be an appropriate approach to the research question, as it helps to “...identify social, economic or political trends that may affect a particular institution or the copy research (research to find out whether certain communications will be read and understood) or the marketing research or evaluation research...” (Kothari, 1985, p. 3).

As such, this study could be evolved in the future using the alternative applied research method in order to find a solution to develop brand loyalty through consumers’ social networks further.

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<sup>24</sup> Kothari defines Applied research as “....research aimed at certain conclusions (say, a solution) facing a concrete social or business problem...” (1985, p. 3).

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Interview Questions for Participants of the Study**

1. What do you understand is a social network?
2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?
3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?
4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?
5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?
6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?
7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?
8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?
9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?
10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?
11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)
12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?
13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?
14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?
15. Have you ever purchased anything online?
16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?
18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?
19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?
20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?
21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?
22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?
23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?
24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?
25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

Appendix B

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A network in which you have access to your friends, and society as a whole. Updating you on current issues, trends, fashion, news in your personal life, nationally and globally.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Occasionally, when we come across something new, exciting or good deals.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Most often, especially when it's something I'm really happy with.

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Not really, when I do i usually consult my friends or sisters.

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes, especially when the price is reasonable or if it's something new and exciting

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

If I like their products, and often according to environmentally friendly products or those that help people in need (Giving to a good cause)

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes, a few small jewellery brands who upload photos of their current/new products

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Sometimes. Generally my good friends follow similar pages to me.

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

The amount of updates they post and perks of joining the page (e.g: discounts, new products, prizes)

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

I often look through the page before I decide whether or not to follow

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

I sometimes enter competitions to win products, I've never won anything

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

Generally my sister or a close friend

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?

Facebook

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

No

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

In a physical store.

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Quality, price, uniqueness, comfort

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

Ever since I started buying my own clothes (10 years ago)



19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

The quality is always fantastic, never disappointed with my purchases

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Cotton on, Country Road, Vertigo

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

Better quality, more reasonable price

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

Often the same style of clothes

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

More limited selection in terms of how often you see someone else wearing the same clothes as you

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

great quality, very good price for what you get, the clothes always last. Really comfortable

## Appendix C

1. What do you understand is a social network?

I think a social network is an online facility in order to connect with others around the world.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Hardly ever. Only when asked what ‘brand’ of clothing I am wearing, or which ‘brand’ I think is better – e.g. Apple or Samsung.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

All the time.

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

This depends what the purchase is and how much it costs. If it is high in value, I would consult someone like my mom or sister before purchasing. If it is low value, I do not discuss with anyone and make the choice on my own.

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Rarely.

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Sometimes I google the ‘ratings’ on the internet, but sometimes I rely on word of mouth.

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes I am.

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes. But that is probably because we are interested in the same kinds of things.

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

If I have had good experiences with them in the past, and if they aren’t going to bombard my newsfeed.

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

Depends what the brand is... But I often only follow if it has come up on my newsfeed. I do not actively seek out brands to follow.

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No, I never have.

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

No.

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

Usually my mom.

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?

Like I mentioned above, I don’t really share information about brands.

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes.

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

Depends on the product. I like to purchase clothes/shoes in a store. On the other hand, buying other materials like cellphone accessories or books, I prefer to buy online.

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Jeans.

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

High school – and because I always struggled to buy jeans when I was growing up because of my long legs. This brand tailored to my needs very well.

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

Because their jeans are high in quality, fair in price and stylish.

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Guess Jeans.

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

I would consider Guess to be a bigger brand as it sells a lot more than just jeans/shoes/clothes. But, the quality is far unsuperior.

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

They are both well known brand names and have good reputations.

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

I don't believe it can be improved for my needs – they tailor for me exactly, so wouldn't change anything.

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Hopefully!

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

I would definitely recommend it – I would say that this brand is high in quality, last you a very long time, stylish and made out of really comfortable material.

Appendix D

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A social network is an online mechanism for social communication, which spans across a number of communication channels, from photographs, to statements, to conversations. It is a communication mechanism that has the capacity to reach further than ones own social circle.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes, I do.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes, I do.

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Only if I know nothing about the actual product, otherwise no, I do not. I do not consult about a brand first, I would only ever consult about a product, and then which would be the best brand for that particular product.

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

I have.

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

By word of mouth, or seeing it in a magazine, or online (Facebook mainly).

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes.

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes.

9. When choosing to "like" or "follow" a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

I only ‘like’ or ‘follow’ brands on Facebook that I purchase or like personally in my everyday life. It is a purely personal preference choice.

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

If I am not interesting in the brand and the products associated with the brand I will not follow. If it is something new, which I did not know about and may like, I will look into it and then decide.

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

To be honest, I cannot remember if I ever have.

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

I have only ever ‘liked’ posts, I have never commented.

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

No one person in particular. I will tell anyone who asks about something I may be wearing, and then we strike up a conversation about the brand, it happens quite often and people like to discuss where items they like come from (brand wise).

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?

No forums.

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

No, I don’t like to shop online.

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

Physical store, I like to look and feel the fabric and texture of items, as well as try it on.

Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?  
Quality, long lasting, fashionable, stylish, and extension of my personality. (It has clothing, beauty, home decor and groceries)
18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?  
For as long as I can remember, my mom has always shopped there.
19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?  
Because it fulfills all my needs, and provides me with a range of wants as well.
20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?  
Pick n Pay mainly.
21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?  
It has a better range of quality products than competitors. Their groceries also last longer.
22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?  
It has many of the same products, at a similar price.
23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?  
I love it as it is.
24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?  
Yes.
25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

Appendix E – Same Participant as Appendix K

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A social network is an online community forum, where you can choose to either interact or not interact with a friend or a brand

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes, based on these discussions, I decide whether to buy into a brand or not.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes, and we share whether they were good or not

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Friends and family, or anyone who has used or experienced the product

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Based on whether they connect with me, or how much they have differentiated themselves, or depending on if what they promise is attractive to me personally!

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes, I loved being part of Wakaberry’s page in particular

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes!

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

If I am interacting with the brand, and want to know more about them, or join a competition they are doing, then I follow them.



10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

Depends if I like the brand as well, if I don't I ignore it.

11. Do you post on social media sites that you've purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

Not really on my own personal page ever

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

Yes, I bought from Wakaberry, posted on their page how great it was, and they responded!

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

My friends

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?

I don't really rate products on forums... I chat about them in person only

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes, movie tickets and from Groupon!

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

Online is way more easy in terms of being able to do it from home, in store is great because its instant gratification, you get your good/purchase immediately.

Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Woolworths

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

Ever since I was little, because my parents shopped there, and we shopped there because of their high quality product promise

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

Because they continue to fulfill their brand promise!

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Pick n pay, food lovers and Spar (the undated ones, like the one in Greenpoint)

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

It is more expensive, it positions itself more on quality rather than price. It has lots of convenience stores, both at Engens’ and scattered in malls, which make it easy to access. Is positioned both on clothing and food.

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

It is a food retailer, it stocks some of the same brands, it has a wide variety of products.

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

I honestly don’t know, from there staff, to their store stock, cleanliness and atmosphere, woolies has crafted the whole experience down to a T!!!

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes, as its aspirational, in that I can allows afford to shop their now, but hope in the future to be able to do all my grocery shopping there.

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

It is a premium food and clothing retailer. The quality of their stuff is amazing, and always delicious!!! Allot of their foods are convenience, which require very little preparation

Appendix F

1. What do you understand is a social network?

My understanding is that it is a place to connect with people who I share interests with and companies who I want to know more about.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Yes, I consult with friends or family depending on product

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Usually on its quality (like in clothing) or on its packaging (make up, food)

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes

9. When choosing to "like" or "follow" a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

The overall look of the page e.g. on Facebook, I will first look at the cover photo and profile photo then see if the updates are relevant and interesting to me

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

Depending on what the brand is, i.e. is it relevant to me

11. Do you post on social media sites that you've purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

No I have never

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

My friend

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?

Facebook for both

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

Definitely purchasing in a physical store as I get the product straight away

Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Quality, style (Woolworths)

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

I became a customer about 9 years ago, the clothing and make up is very good quality and reasonably priced.

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

I like to buy something that will last and Woolworths constantly delivers. The clothing, handbags, shoes etc. are always fashionable and well made

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Other big brands like Edgars, Mr Price, Pick n Pay, Clicks

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

Better: Prices in regards to quality, high quality food

Worse: It is more expensive so it is hard to purchase stuff from Woolworths if you are on a budget

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

They are all selling similar things i.e. Woolworths sells clothing, make up, shoes, food, plants and has little restaurants where for example Pick n Pay sells mainly food but also sells clothing, shoes, plants and has started opening little eateries in some of their stores.

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

I can't think of a way it could be improved

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Definitely!

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

I would recommend it and I would probably mention the clothing, shoes etc. and the high quality food products. I have also always had fantastic service with them.

Appendix G

1. What do you understand is a social network?

Network base to share events, photos and news

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Yes, mom and friends

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Price and its desirability ( desirability vs affordability)

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

If it's something I constantly want to be reminded about

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

If it's something I'm interested in I follow

11. Do you post on social media sites that you've purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

Sometimes. And yes I do get responses

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

No

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

Depends what it is! Generally a friend

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences? – with friends? – with family?

Facebook, twitter

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

Both. Online is convenient

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Must have!

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

Because of the fit of their clothing

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

Because I feel good in it

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Other performance brands

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

More versatile. And the fit is the best. It is also a little more expensive

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

It is on trend

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

I need to earn more money to buy more from them!!

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

It's consistent, vibrant and very desirable

## Appendix H

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A social network is a social structure of groups of individuals or organisations. It is a network of friends, colleagues, family etc. It is the grouping of individuals via a(n online) community, who share similar/common interests and communicate with each other.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes, briefly.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes.



4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Not normally when purchasing a brand as I would have knowledge about the brand via their marketing in order to make my decision. However, definitely when purchasing a specific product (and the aspect of the various brands plays a role here). I will consult with someone who has an unbiased view and general knowledge about the product or brand; or someone who has tested or had an experience with the product/brand.

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes, especially if I am either impressed or dissatisfied with it.

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Mainly through asking around and getting suggestions of brands, and whichever brand has the highest following or the highest recommendation. Or by asking someone I know will have knowledge in the area.

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes. On Facebook.

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes.

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

Who else follows the brand, the amount of good feedback they receive, how often they interact with the public, how they handle their negative feedback and the amount of “likes” they have on their page.

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore.

Most likely ignore. Unless it is something I would be interested in.

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (Comments, likes, etc.)

Yes and yes. I will post about a positive or negative experience but not merely that I purchased the brand/product.

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

Yes and yes. I would not interact with a brand if their page is dormant – knowing they will not respond.

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

Probably my best friends or people I know would be interested in the brand/product. For example, I won’t tell some of my friends who aren’t interested in gymming about a good protein shake, but I will tell those friends of mine who I know will appreciate the feedback.

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences? – with friends? – With family?

Social media, email, text, Whatsapp, Skype, Facetime.

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes, often.

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

They both have their positives and their downfalls. Probably in a physical store because then there is less chance of one being dissatisfied with the product.

Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Clothing, fashion, food, value, healthy, genuine.

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

Many years back. Because of the quality of their products and the general atmosphere and friendly staff.

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

I have never been disappointed by the brand and they continue to deliver and meet my expectations of quality products.

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Pretty much all general food stores and classic clothing stores due to it being an all-purpose store.

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

It is clean, the staff are friendly and always willing to be of service, the food is of high and genuine quality, the clothing is made well and it has everything from clothing, to food, to cleaning supplies to linen.

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

It stocks similar products however, it makes its own products.

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

As of yet, I have had a great experience at the store and have yet to think something needs to be improved.

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes, definitely.

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

The products are quality, you may be paying more but you are getting high quality products. It is a pleasure to shop there and the staff are friendly. Yes.

Appendix I

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A group of people that are connected in some way- certain shared interests and features

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes, with my family we discuss the purchasing price of different brands and which ones are better

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Sometimes, I will ask advice from friends or family that understand the brand better than me to get a second opinion

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes, to find out what it is like and if anybody else has used it yet

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

If a person recommends it, I will have a look at it and if I feel it is better than the current one I am using for a particular thing, I will look at the price and if there is not a huge difference I will switch to it.

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

If the brand is something that I believe in and if I have had a good experience with them

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

If is one that interests me and I have had dealings with it in the past then I will like the page too

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No, I have not really posted on the sites before

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

I have commented on the good quality of a brand and I got a response from the company, thanking me

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

My mom- family

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences? – with friends? – with family?

Facebook

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes, I have purchases books from Kalahari.net and horse gear

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

The physical store, because you are able to browse around and also you can choice the item that you want-check that it isn’t damaged etc. When you order something online you might be sent a faulty good, or it could be broken in transit etc

Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Good service, free range food, good quality food, clothing

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

The food quality of Woolworths food is also good, if you have a problem with a product they are also very efficient in fixing the problem-either exchanging it or giving you your money back. The clothing store is also an attraction because they sell a range of clothes of good quality.

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

They have always provided good services; good quality food and clothing and they sell "free range". The staff are also friendly and helpful

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Pick n pay , food lovers market

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

Woolworths provides good quality food. I know when we have brought fruit from pick n pay within a few (2-3) days it has been off, same as with carrots from food lovers- the carrots have often been slimy and rotten (had to take bag back).

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

Woolworths sells food and clothing, the same as pick n pay. And the food side makes them the same as food lovers market.

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

Woolworths should develop a card (like myschool) but the proceeds go to charities ( animal and human)

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes I do

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

Yes, I would recommend it. I would tell others about the services offered- the ability to be able to buy good food and clothing quality, the efficient and friendly service that is offered.

## Appendix J

1. What do you understand is a social network?

Networks that allow you to connect and communicate with friends

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Yes, my sister or my dad (depending on the product)

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes, depending on whether I think they'll be interested

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Research

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes, not many though

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

I’m not too sure, I don’t always choose the same as my friends

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

If I identify with the brand, if I like their ad campaigns, or if I think I will get free stuff!

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

It depends on whether I personally identify with the brand, or it is a particular product that I use

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site? If so, did they respond?

No

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

My sister or my best friend

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?

– with friends? – with family?

Both. Again, depends on whether I think they’ll be interested.

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

No

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

I don’t have a credit card! I still like going in to a shop to see what I’m getting.

That said, if I know exactly what I want (and have physically seen it) would not be averse to buying it online.



Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Quality. Some affiliation with my individual style (e.g. in Woolies (clothing) I know that I will find something I like). Good value for money

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

My family has always shopped there.

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

I know I am getting good quality and value for money.

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Woolworths clothing: The Space, Vertigo. They compete for my business (in my head!!)

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

Much better! To be honest, I hardly shop anywhere else!

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

It's not!

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

Smaller clothing ranges so that you know your clothes are unique.

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yup!

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

Great prices for the quality you get. The fashion buyers are adept and keep in line with trends.

Appendix K

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A social network to me is a communication platform, usually online I'd say. Free comes to mind, I feel like everything we use is free – Whatsapp, Facebook. So something that is free and online communication.

- a. So you feel it is a way to communicate? Do you also feel that you can have a social network that is not online – people that are in your network online, do you have a different network offline?

That's interesting, I would say for certain things I do. So for example, Wakkaberry. I can't be friends with Wakkaberry, but online I can be. Maybe online I can interact with more people overseas as well. Then in reality I have friends who are also online.

- b. So different social networks defined by different thing?

Ya

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family? Do you or they get passionate/heated when a favourite brand is criticised?

Yes I do, I think they're a huge influence. Yes! I feel like – I'm using Wakkaberry as an example – when people criticise Wakkaberry compared to other brands (Marcel's), I feel like...I have such good experiences with Wakkaberry, so when someone criticises it I get heated and stand up for them. And also they reply to my messages on Facebook! So it's not like they're not a friend, I feel like they're personal to me now!

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

I do. I consult them before and after.

- a. Does this lead to them purchasing similar items?

Yes, I feel like just as they are an influence to me, I am to them

- b. How often? Is it part of your daily conversation?

Yes, yes it is.

4. So it comes up frequently?

Ya, it's not purchases, its anything I guess. Any interaction with something I've seen. Or something she [mom] will like that I haven't bought that I'll tell her about.

a. Do they question your purchase and offer advice on alternatives?

Ya, I think maybe it depends a little bit on the price point. If it was a very expensive item, they know with me that they risk their life by judging me for it! But no, I do. As I said I would have consulted them, especially if it was a big ticket item, I would have consulted them beforehand and get a few opinions. But they do, they would be happy to always offer their opinion and I think family especially gives an honest opinion whether you want it or not.

5. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Family

a. How often does their advice influence your decision?

I would say that their opinion is important but I make the end decision. So probably only 50% of the time.

i. So you don't shop at specific food store, for example, because that is where you mom has always shopped?

When it comes to big ticket items, especially electronics, I go with the brands that my family has always used because I've grown up knowing that they work. I trust then and I know that my mom and dad are very careful about choosing. They don't blow money; they will go out and do research. So I trust them.

6. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes

a. How do they receive the information? Interested in hearing? Or just humouring you? (they have a reliable brand and they're going to stick with it)

It’s mostly that, but if there is a huge point of like differentiation. Like a huge ‘this is so much better and I can prove it to you in one sentence’, then they usually are interested. And I think it’s a price thing, I think price maybe versus quality.

- b. Do they ask to see/try your purchase before they buy?

Yes. I think that would be the case, if it was the kind of product that would be available to that. Or it would be more likely that I show it to them – ‘look at what I bought, look how amazing it is

- 7. How do you decide to purchase a new brand? How do you stray from an old favourite?

- a. If possible supply me with an example

Price. If it’s on like a special.

- a. If your brand changes?

Definitely. If the quality of the brand I’m using goes down, or even something like pack size changes or the value changes, I look at new products

- b. E.g.?

Organics – I used to use Organics a lot and I noticed that their refill options – the big ones. Pricewise they were very good so I gave it a shot, but I found that the refill was lower quality – my hair was still oily. It made me think less of the brand so now I use Pantene.

- 8. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

I am, but very selectively. I don’t want to get spammed. Nothing makes me more upset than getting a spam email! I want to interact in my time, don’t come into my space...

- a. Do you find that you then interact more with the brand?

Ya and they’re offering deals, specials, promotions and replying to messages – that is very important. I don’t want to post on a brand’s wall and then I don’t get a response.

- b. Does the interaction/connection make you feel more secure in the relationship you have with the brand?

Yes it does. I want to feel like its two ways. If I’m putting out my time to interact with the brand, I want a response. I don’t want to feel like just another consumer when I’m making an effort

9. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

No, I don’t think so actually. Maybe one or two

- a. How does this make you feel about the trustworthiness of the brand?

Yes and no. I like to feel like, it’s quite strange, but ‘custom’. I like it to be ‘my’ brand. If everyone knows about it, it loses its ‘special’. And also big pages with lots of people seem fake – how can so many people be part of a relationship.

- i. So you prefer a more intimate relationship with a brand?

Ya, I do

- b. Or is it irrelevant to you?

No, but at the same time if I saw thirty people had suddenly like a page then I will like it too to see what the hype is about.

10. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

I will look up their page. I will see what the interaction is, again value – do they do specials, what do they give you to follow them. What value do they add to your life?

- a. Why do you follow Wakkaberry?

Because, I like their story. And I like that they are all about the consumer, from the point of view that when you walk in there, they greet you, they have specials, there’s always new flavours – I can find out the flavours on social media. So it’s quite informative.

- i. So it makes your consumption of the brand easier to have access from your home?

Ya, a lot easier. And also I shop before I shop. I know that sounds weird, but I want to know what I’m getting, I don’t want to waste my time.

11. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you **ignore**?

a. Why?

Competitions. Ridiculous competitions – like this and you win... that irritates me immediately. I don’t like anything that asks you to, or if you try like something and it says first you must add ten friends, then I think bugger off. That isn’t a way to start a relationship, be happy that I’m liking you – don’t ask me to go make a fool of myself to other people who might not be interested in you.

i. So you feel that they compromise your trust in them by asking you to dilute the relationship by including many people?

Ya. And also, I don’t like automatic responses. If I like a page ad I get one spam message I leave it immediately

12. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (Comments, likes, etc.)

No. I would share on Wakkaberry’s page, like I had a bowl of your happiness today, but that is just interaction with a brand. I wouldn’t publicly make a status about purchasing, purely because it’s no one’s business and I don’t feel that it’s an interesting status.

13. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site?

Wakkaberry

a. If so, did they respond?

yes

b. Was it a positive or negative experience? How did this colour your perception and further interactions with the brand?

Yes it is always positive interaction. But I feel like because I have had a relationship with the brand now if there was a negative experience, I

could go to them and tell them that I've had a bad experience. I feel like they would make it right.

- i. So it increases your trust in them because they've been so forthcoming with you?

Ya, it's exactly that. So I would tell them if something was going wrong with their brand.

- ii. Interaction with a brand on a social media website in a negative context? Example?

Yes. It wasn't quite social media, but it was a property site and they had spelt suburban wrong and or suburb wrong. So I feel that on a property website – an international property website as well...I went to click on the icon and it said Southern Surrburbs with another 'r', and it was a huge icon on their page, and I looked at this and thought...basically the brand felt like it wasn't credible. They made a huge mistake on their site, so I emailed the lady and I said, 'just as a consumer browsing your site, you have a big spelling error' and I got a very friendly response back saying thank you so much for letting us know I'm going to get to the bottom of it. and that was the end of that, but I felt like it was a moment of 'gosh, how could you let a mistake like that happen?' and then when she replied and said sorry, and said she was going to fix it I thought okay, cool. The brand became human again.

14. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

It would probably be my twin sister. Because she's at home, so when I get home with all my purchases I will tell her what I've got. So definitely probably the person I live with would be the person that I share that kind of stuff with. Otherwise, best friends and my mom.

15. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – With family?

Mostly face-to-face. Again, for me, saying that I bought something on any kind of platform...I don't know, maybe it's the materialistic thing, I don't know. It wouldn't be something I'd include in a social media conversation.

- a. So only shared with an immediate social network? Not an extended social network?

No.

16. Have you ever purchased anything online?

yes

- a. What motivated this decision?

Because of the convenience. Very convenient, maybe too convenient. One minute money is there and then it's gone, and something is on its way to you, it's fabulous! And the options are insane online; you can get anything and everything. And very good prices as well. I lived in England for a bit and I used EBay over there, and over there it is even easier – if you purchase something at nine in the morning, it will be with you by four o'clock in the afternoon. Or if you purchase something after twelve in the afternoon, it will be with you by nine o'clock the next morning. So books, everything you can get, and I think it's fantastic.

17. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

I think my limit is clothing; I would never buy clothing online. I think that is very much tactile. But books online, movies online, even jewellery I'll do online, electronics I'll do online, things that don't have to fit. Furniture, clothing, other specific things, I wouldn't do online.

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

18. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Quality, black and white, clean, long lasting, clothing and food – I bought this onion, it's a ridiculous story, but you have to hear me out. A peeled onion from Woolies – you know you get a bag of peeled onions – I bought it six weeks ago and I just cut open the onion – perfect! And put it into a salad, it



tasted as fresh as the day I bought it. it made me think that Woolies is all great and well, but what the hell are they putting in that food to make it last?! A peeled onion lasts six weeks! So long lasting definitely.

19. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

As long as I can remember, my mom is a Woolworths customer. I inherited the brand.

20. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

I have stopped shopping there once or twice because of the price. It is premium, although I feel that it is getting better, I believe that it is more competitive now than it's ever been. The Woolworths coffee, the Nescafe, is less than Pick 'n Pay by about R6 or R7 – quite a big difference. I think it is becoming more competitive and I think Woolies is the one to beat right now – quality, long lasting, and competitive prices. On that note, I trust Woolies. I'd rather go to Woolies and pay a bit extra and know that you're going to get 'throw away' food. Especially with raw food, I feel there is a lot of trust involved. You've got to trust because its raw and hasn't been cooked, with meat as well – with that you've got to trust what you're eating is good, that it's got no chemicals on the outside or worms on the inside, or buggies...it's a huge trust thing and that's why I continue...they've never let me down.

21. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

I think Spar, not all Spars, but some of them – Cape Quarter Spar, they do amazing things – very premium brands. Food Lovers as well, they've picked up their game a lot – also European brands. So Spar and Food Lovers are probably more compete with each other but they're competing for the same quality I think. The best food experience is Woolies.

22. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

I feel that if I go to Spar, I might get more of a range of prices and products, whereas with Woolies I'll probably be stuck with the Woolies brand that

might be the only option. I used to freak out about giving another option, but one other option – the Woolies brand and one other option, but if I go to a Spar, I’ll get all the brands available in that one product. So that way I feel that Spar is a bit better, but going back to the trust – on raw food especially – Woolies is the one to go to (milk, dairy, meat, veg, and fruit). But again, it’s also got to do with price. Dairy I’m not too fussy about, yoghurt is yoghurt and milk is milk, and it all probably comes from the same bloody factory – I find I’m very critical of brands these days! I feel like they’re up to no good, all the time! I feel Woolies is very much more convenient, they’ve managed to pop up stores for when you need that meal - there is one everywhere, and there is always a free parking outside mostly. Woolies have really clocked it in terms of getting customers into their store. Whereas Spars and things, they don’t care, you have to pay.

23. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

24. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

Have to give that a thought. I think their stocking is a bit of a problem – they have a huge range of products that they offer, but because it’s so huge it’s always haphazard about stocking their stores. So I have to go to a huge Woolies if I want an exotic thing that they offer which is quite annoying I think, because I get used to something at Woolies. They also chop and change, always redoing and renewing their products when you really like it and then suddenly it’s gone off the shelves. So I think maybe warning if they do change a product, I would like to get warning and get a chance to say ‘no please don’t because I love it’. So maybe more interaction.

a. Do you find that they target specific areas in terms of what they stock?

You mean like they target...?

i. Constantia vs Noordhoek vs Rondebosch – students vs housewives

I think Woolies is good about making it all look the same, but maybe the stocking is – as I said, they have such a wide range, that the specialty items you can only get in bigger stores, which they do happen to locate in

affluent areas. So yes I think there is probably a difference, not in what they stock, but in what they can stock. They choose to put everything – get a bigger property and put everything into uh Constantia Woolies and they are happy to go to bare minimum in Rosebank.

25. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

If they manage to maintain what they’ve got going and manage to keep their prices competitive, I will. But as I said, I’m skeptical. When and if they finally reveal what they put in their foods to make them last, I will double think it. Because I feel like there’s a bit of...

a. So you have a niggle?

I do, it’s not natural. It’s great, convenient, but there is something unnatural about Woolies’ food and that’s not the way I feel like I’m moving. Definitely more conscious about what I’m putting into my body

26. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

I feel like I don’t need to say anything because everyone knows quality and Woolworths go hand in hand. The brand speaks for itself and it’s done a very good job of making sure everyone knows what it is. But if they didn’t, I would recommend it and its products, the new products that come out of Woolies, I love! Everything is from Woolies, my water bottle; even my handbag is from Woolies.

## **Appendix L**

1. What do you understand is a social network?

An online network of people who can interact remotely for various purposes.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family? Do you or they get passionate/heated when a favourite brand is criticised?

Yes and yes.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes

- a. Does this lead to them purchasing similar item?

Sometimes

- b. How often?

Depends on the product in question

- c. Or do they question your purchase and offer advice on alternatives?

Not very often, because i do thorough research before deciding on a specific product.

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Sometimes. Friends, online acquaintances or family - basically anyone with experience of the product

- a. How often does their advise influence your decision?

Sometimes. It will often give me another perspective to consider which could influence my decision

- b. Why do you think this is?

As a consumer, one has to be aware not to fall victim of clever marketing schemes. So getting an insider's opinion, someone who has experience with the product, this can greatly influence my decision to purchase or not to purchase a specific product.

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes

- a. How do they receive the information?

If something they are interested in, they will be curious to find out more. If not, they will merely note it.

- b. How often do they purchase the same brand?

This depends on whether they need a similar product/brand

- c. Do they ask to see/try your purchase before they buy?

Most often, yes.

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Most often via word of mouth

- a. If possible supply me with an example

vehicles, horse riding equipment, food - I will not use a new brand if the quality hasn't been verified by someone I trust because of the expensive nature of some of these products as well as the possibility to cause harm if using a lesser quality brand/product

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes

- a. Do you find that you then interact more with the brand?

Definitely

- b. Does the interaction/connection make you feel more secure in the relationship you have with the brand?

It gives me an inside view on the brand and the products they offer. It also gives me the opportunity to contact them publicly (and thus get a faster response rate) than if I were to email or phone them.

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes

- a. How does this make you feel about the trustworthiness of the brand?

It does not influence my feelings

- b. Or is it irrelevant to you?

Yes

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

My interest in the brand

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

If it is something I am interested in, I will follow suit. if not, I will ignore

- a. Why?

One deals with so many different brands on a daily basis that you forget about some! A reminder is sometimes nice in order to realise that you would like to follow that brand too.

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

I have in the past ( e.g. A Garmin forerunner running watch). I have received several reactions to that.

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site?

Yes

- a. If so, did they respond?

Yes

- b. Was it a positive or negative experience? How did this colour your perception and further interactions with the brand?

I have interacted on more than one occasion. I find that vocally airing complaints on social media leads to quicker response time from the brand in question. Especially compared to emails which are easy to ignore. I try to write compliments too, but admittedly, not as often. Overall, I would say it is a positive experience, because of the quick response time to avoid bad publicity, but there are always exceptions.

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

The first person I see who will be interested!

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?

I do not understand the use of the word forum?

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Often

## **Appendix M**

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A social network is a website on the internet where people can interact with each other on a social level but without actually talking face to face.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family? Do you or they get passionate/heated when a favourite brand is criticised?

No, brands are not really discussed that much, but if they are it is more guy friends that get upset when their particular brand is criticised.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

a. Does this lead to them purchasing similar items?

Sometimes if the item that has been purchased is good and is useful

b. How often?

Not very often

c. Or do they question your purchase and offer advice on alternatives?

No, sometimes people will question things but everyone has their own opinion

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Friends or family are often good to consult to see if they have heard anything about the product, good or bad

a. How often does their advice influence your decision?

If they have had negative experiences with the product then naturally I will not be eager to rush and buy it.

b. Why do you think this is?

People want products that work, they aren't going to buy something that they know could have a problem and not work properly

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Not very often

a. How do they receive the information?

Sometimes with interest sometimes not if they happen to be against that particular brand

b. How often do they purchase the same brand?

Quite often

c. Do they ask to see/try your purchase before they buy?

If they have seen it by chance in the house and they like it that often influences people to go and buy one as well because they can see it is useful

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

If the product is useful and a logical choice

a. If possible supply me with an example

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes

a. Do you find that you then interact more with the brand?

No

b. Does the interaction/connection make you feel more secure in the relationship you have with the brand?

No

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes

a. How does this make you feel about the trustworthiness of the brand?

I feel like it is trustworthy if other people I know buy or use it because it must mean that other people besides me find it useful and a good product.

b. Or is it irrelevant to you?



9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

I don’t often follow brands but if I do my choice often comes from using a product of the brand and having a good experience using it

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

I normally ignore

- a. Why?

I only like it if I have used the brand before and know that it is good

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No I do not comment

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site?

No

- a. If so, did they respond?

- b. Was it a positive or negative experience? How did this colour your perception and further interactions with the brand?

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

I don’t tell people when I have purchased something. I will tell them about it if the person comments or mentions the product I have bought

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?

I don’t share information

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

No

- a. What motivated this decision?

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

A physical store. There the product can be examined or tried on for sizing.  
Also people can be asked for help if it is needed

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Cool and good

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

I have been using it for ages. It has good stuff that I know is reliable

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

The service is good, the products are always reliable and good quality

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Other stores who sell the same items of the brand that I use

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

Nearly all the stuff is imported; it is very durable and does not wear easily. It is often very expensive though

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

Some of the designs are the same

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

It can be less expensive

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes I do

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

The quality of the brand and the service of the people selling the brand is very good. It is useful and durable. I recommend this brand to everyone who wants a reliable and well-made brand

#### Appendix N

1. What do you understand is a social network?

Network by which I can interact with friends on a global scale

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family?

Yes

- a. Do you or they get passionate/heated when a favourite brand is criticised?

Yes especially if it a good quality product

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes

- a. Does this lead to them purchasing similar items?

Sometimes

- b. How often?

2/3 times

- c. Or do they question your purchase and offer advice on alternatives?

Yes if it's a new product and we are unsure

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Yes, my mom or dad

- a. How often does their advice influence your decision?

Yes

- b. Why do you think this is?

Because they have always given me sound advise

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes

a. How often do you discuss newly discovered brands with friends or family and how do they receive the information?

Every other month

b. How often do they purchase the same brand?

$\frac{3}{4}$  of the time

c. Do they ask to see/try your purchase before they buy?

Yes

6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

If I have a need for the purchase

If possible supply me with an example

Russell Hobbs egg boiler. My mom got one, it was her first time buying Russell Hobbs and she was impressed so I bought one

7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

On Facebook

a. Do you find that you then interact more with the brand?

Not really

b. Does the interaction/connection make you feel more secure in the relationship you have with the brand?

It's still artificial for me

8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Friends that have similar interests

a. How does this make you feel about the trustworthiness of the brand?

That they have a good name

b. Or is it irrelevant to you?

9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

In case I have a need for them and any new products they might post about

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?  
I generally look into it before doing it  
a. Why?  
To see if I might be interested in the products or not
11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)  
Not really only if I’m really excited and want to share with friends
12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site?  
Not really  
a. If so, did they respond?  
b. Was it a positive or negative experience? How did this colour your perception and further interactions with the brand?
13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?  
My mom and dad
14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?  
– with friends? – with family?  
Over the phone while catching up
15. Have you ever purchased anything online?  
Nope  
a. What motivated this decision?
16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?  
Physical because I can see the quality I’m purchasing

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?  
Happy

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?  
‘Since I was a little girl cause my mom bought our food from there
19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?  
Because of the quality I get
20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?  
Pick ‘n Pay
21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?  
I don’t always get fresh food from pick n pay but Woolworths always has fresh food
22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?  
They both cater for a wide range of products
23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?  
Bringing one into Grahamstown
24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?  
Yes
25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?  
Quality, generally get everything you go into the store to purchase

## Appendix O

1. What do you understand is a social network?

Social Networking is a site one the internet that can be used for entertainment, and for meeting people with similar interests as yourself.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family? Do you or they get passionate/heated when a favourite brand is criticised?

Yes I do discuss brands with family and friends and depending on certain brands a few of my friends may get a bit edgy if they are criticised.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes

- a. Does this lead to them purchasing similar items?

Sometimes my friends will buy similar clothing as the item I have just bought if they like it.

- b. How often?

Not very often.

- c. Or do they question your purchase and offer advice on alternatives?

In many cases my mom tries to advise me on buying different items, but most of my friends like the items that I buy.

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Yes I do ask people like my mom, sister and best friend for advice when buying product or brand that is unfamiliar to me.

- a. How often does their advice influence your decision?

My mom’s advice influences me the most because she generally does know what products and brands are the best to buy.

- b. Why do you think this is?

My mom has had more experience with shopping for brand items and knows them better than I do if she uses them.

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes

- a. How do they receive the information?

Many times they want to try the new brand to see what the quality of it is

- b. How often do they purchase the same brand?

Depending on the continuous quality, if the quality is good they will keep buying it if not they will try a new brand.

- c. Do they ask to see/try your purchase before they buy?

If they are thinking of buying the same brand or product as me they normally do ask me how it is and if they can try some before they pay for something that might not work for them, like make-up.

- 6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

I look up reviews on the brand, I ask friends and family how well known it is and if its good quality and still cheap enough to buy on a regular basis if need be

- a. If possible supply me with an example?

Cover up from 'Rimmel London'

- 7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

A few yes.

- a. Do you find that you then interact more with the brand?

It depends on if I can afford an item that has that brand name on it.

- b. Does the interaction/connection make you feel more secure in the relationship you have with the brand?

If I buy that brand regularly and am kept updated on their products then yes I do feel more secure in my relationship with that brand.

- 8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Many of them are, yes. It shows similar taste in brands for my age group

- a. How does this make you feel about the trustworthiness of the brand?

Since they are continuously making their brand known, I think that makes them more trustworthy

- b. Or is it irrelevant to you?

I do not think it is irrelevant

- 9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?



How many people I know who have ‘liked’ or ‘followed’ the page before I have, and if I have knowledge of the brand.

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore? Why?

Sometimes I will follow or like the page if they ask me to or if I actually do want to like/follow the brand’s page

11. Do you post on social media sites that you’ve purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No, I don’t post on sites about brands

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site?

No I have not

- a. If so, did they respond?

N/A

- b. Was it a positive or negative experience? How did this colour your perception and further interactions with the brand?

N/A

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

My mother or best friend

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?

– with friends? – with family?

Facebook and Twitter

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes

- a. What motivated this decision?

I purchased an E-book which can only be bought online

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

In a physical store

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Quality and reliable, as well as good quality

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

Probably when I was about 14 and I started experimenting with makeup

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

It is of good quality, and affordable enough to buy regularly

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Using makeup as an example, I would say Clicks' 'Essence'

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

Their makeup works better for my skin type, colour and texture, it has better lasting value and the consistency of the products is the best

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

It is getting increasingly expensive

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

More variety

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes, unless I find a close alternative that is more affordable

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

I would definitely recommend it. I would describe it as reliable, affordable, and long lasting

Appendix P

1. What do you understand is a social network?

A application/website/community of people that are connected worldwide and can share photos, videos, messages etc.

2. Do you discuss brands with your friends and family? Do you or they get passionate/heated when a favourite brand is criticised?

Yes. On occasion, it would depend on how important the brand is to that particular person and they would then respond if they felt that brand threatened, especially if they had a close connection/loyalty to that brand. For example a product they have used for many years, or if they worked for a particular company and felt a need to promote their brand.

3. Do you discuss purchases with you friends and family?

Yes

- a. Does this lead to them purchasing similar items?

Yes, especially amongst friends e.g. make up

- b. How often?

Depending on the product and how often you purchase, also it depends on who you discuss it with. My mother and closest friends for example would be almost daily.

- c. Or do they question your purchase and offer advice on alternatives?

If money has been wasted or a better product can be found in the same price range then yes.

4. Do you consult with someone before you purchase a brand or product? Who?

Yes, mom or best friend

- a. How often does their advice influence your decision?

Mostly

- b. Why do you think this is?

I value their opinion and they know me best, what I would like etc.

5. Do you discuss a newly discovered brand with friends or family?

Yes, if it has caught my attention

- a. How do they receive the information?

If it's a product that would be of use to them then they receive it well.

- b. How often do they purchase the same brand?

Frequently

- c. Do they ask to see/try your purchase before they buy?

Yes

- 6. How do you decide to purchase a new brand?

Price and advertising

- a. If possible supply me with an example?

I recently purchased a new lip crayon (similar to a lipstick) which I would not ordinarily have tried but a friend of mine had one and encouraged me to try it in store, I loved it and bought it. Brand: Astor

- 7. Are you part of brand pages on social media networks?

Yes

- a. Do you find that you then interact more with the brand?

Not really, if it is international (Revlon). If it's a local page for an international brand then yes. E.g. Revlon SA

- b. Does the interaction/connection make you feel more secure in the relationship you have with the brand?

Not in particular

- 8. Do you find that others on your social media networks are connected to the same brand pages as you are?

Yes

- a. How does this make you feel about the trustworthiness of the brand?

Secure and that the brand is trendy

- b. Or is it irrelevant to you?

- 9. When choosing to “like” or “follow” a brand on social media, what factors help you decide?

If it's of relevance to me, if myself or any of my friends use the products

10. If you have seen one of your friends or family members “liking” or “following” a brand on social media, do you follow suit? Or do you ignore?

It's brand dependant

- a. Why?

I don't follow brands on social media closely

11. Do you post on social media sites that you've purchased a specific brand? If so, do you find that your social network responds to this? (comments, likes, etc.)

No (However if I had a problem I would post on their site)

12. Have you ever interacted with a brand on their social media site?

No

- a. If so, did they respond?

- b. Was it a positive or negative experience? How did this colour your perception and further interactions with the brand?

13. Who is the first person you tell after purchasing a brand?

Mother/ closest friends if it would appeal to them

14. What forums do you use to share information about brands or your brand preferences?

– with friends? – with family?

Facebook

15. Have you ever purchased anything online?

Yes

- a. What motivated this decision?

Good reviews/ratings & cheaper prices

16. Which is more satisfying to you, purchasing online? Or in a physical store?

Store, but online is often easier. The downside is having to wait for the product

**Apply the following questions to your favourite all-purpose store, e.g.: Woolworths.**

17. When you think of your favourite brand, what are the first words that come to mind?

Quality, packaging, cleanliness

18. When and why did you first become a customer of this brand?

Since birth (my mother is a loyal customer)

19. Why do you continue to be a customer of this brand?

Consistency and good products

20. Who do you consider to be competitors of your favourite brand?

Checkers, pick 'n pay

21. How is this brand different from its competitors (in terms of being both better and worse)?

It is more expensive yet for the quality of the products we are more willing to pay the extra for it as we know the standard of products is far higher

22. How is the brand the same as its competitors?

Same type of products and it is getting increasingly expensive

23. How can your experience of this brand be improved?

More variety (not sure what you mean- I love Woolies anyways!)

24. Do you anticipate that you will continue to be a customer of the brand in the future?

Yes

25. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?

The brand already speaks for itself through reputation and advertising. Though I would highly recommend it to someone who does not know the brand. Their top qualities I've mentioned previously (quality, packaging, cleanliness as well as consistency). They also have an emphasis on healthier eating and for

example promote the origin of their fresh fruits etc. through posters in store.  
(Well from what I can remember!!)